

Two of a kind

by Shnizel

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Summary: Otto's world is turned upside down when a news coverage captures the face of someone that should not exist.

1. Chapter 1

****To all you readers out there. This is my first ever fanfic dedicated to... hmm...****

****ME**** ****of course. Thanks to all my friends who have supported me in my short writing career. Those who will also no doubt tell me that it is not over yet. I also want to thank you, the reader, whom life will be meaningless without for an author like me. I hope you guys like it. :D****

****ENJOY!****

****Chaper 1****

Nero sat at his desk, studying the recent year's reports. So far it had been a good year. There had only been five fires, three explosions and two escape attempts. And, thankfully, there hadn't been a single attack on the school.

So far, Nero reminded himself. Four months did not account for the full year. And if recent years had anything to go by, they were due for an unscheduled visit, probably from some vicious thugs who were intent on seizing H.I.V.E., armed to the teeth with lethal weapons and controlled by some former G.L.O.V.E member, gone rogue.

An insistent bleeping suddenly broke Nero from his troublesome thoughts. He sighed and rubbed at his eyes with one hand. Sometimes his life could become very stressful indeed. But then again, he wouldn't give up his job even if he had been given the chance.

Nero put down the reports he'd been reading and hit a button on his

desk. The screen in front of him lit up with H.I.V.E. mind's blue wireframe face. The A.I looked worried.

"Yes H.I.V.E. mind?" Nero asked, a sense of foreboding gnawing away at him.

"I was filtering through some recent news reports when I came across something that may be of some interest to you." The A.I replied.

"And that would be...?" Nero prompted when H.I.V.E. mind didn't continue. The A.I cocked his head to one side, seeming to make a descision. A frown flickered across his face.

"H.I.V.E. mind Why don't you just tell me and get it over with?" Nero sighed.

"Because you may not want to know." He replied.

"Meaning?" Nero asked, alarm bells ringing in his head.

"Well, it won't particularly affect the running of this facility and..." Here H.I.V.E. mind faltered.

"And...?" Nero asked, a touch of impatience edging into his voice.

"I'll just show you." The A.I whispered, head bowed. His wireframe face was then replaced by what looked like some sort of news footage.

The scene showed the outside of a police station, surrounded by media of all sorts. Lights flashed in the background as reporters took photographs. A row of policemen held them back, clearing a path to a car sitting parked in the road.

A female woman began to talk, relating what was happening to the public. Nero couldn't hear what she was saying. For whatever reason, H.I.V.E. mind had put the video on mute. As she glanced back towards the doors of the building, they were suddenly flung open by two policecops.

The picture quality became fuzzy as the cameraman tried to find a good position to stand and capture the moment. The backs of heads and arms could be seen blocking the view of whoever was now being escorted to the car. Nero watched with a mixture of confusion and curiosity.

The row of guards holding the reporters back, pushed them even further and the camera was knocked from the man's hands. It fell onto the steps leading up to the building on it's side facing the car.

At this point the prisoner had reached the vehicle. They were wearing a hoody that covered their face, hiding their features. One of the policemen opened the door and the person climbed in.

The hood of their top was scraped back by the doorframe as they sat down. It fell around their shoulders and the person's face was visible for the split second before the door was shut.

It was unmistakable.

Pale skin. Blue eyes. Brown shoulder length hair.

Nero's eyes widened in shock and disbelief, as H.I.V.E. mind's face reappeared.

"Tell me that was fake." He said, frowning.

"I'm afraid not." The A.I replied. "What do you want me to do?"

"Erm... Nothing. Just... Actually... There is something that you can do."

"Anything, Dr Nero."

"Get that boy to H.I.V.E. I don't care what it takes. Send Natalya if you must. But I want him in my office by the end of the day."

****Did you think it was good, bad tell me!****

****You know what you have to do!****

****Review! (that rhymed)****

2. Chapter 2

****Well here it is... Chapter 2! Thank you to all those who read the first chapter, reviewed and will hopefully read the second instalment. It's great to know that people actually care and are there for support. So you know what to do after you've read this one.****

****Review! Review! Review!****

****ENJOY!****

****Chapter 2****

Otto's head snapped up as Ms Leon jumped onto his desk, her claws imbedding themselves into the woodwork with a thud.

"Am I boring you Mr Malpense?" She asked, her voice dangerously calm.

"No. I was nearly... erm..." Otto struggled, a yawn escaping his lips. Ms Leon's eyes narrowed and a soft growl emanated from her throat. "I mean I'm sorry. It'll never happen again." The boy quickly gabbled, pushing his chair backwards.

"It had better not." The cat tried to lift her paw so as to jab a sharpened claw in his direction and emphasise her point. But it wouldn't move.

"What...?" Ms Leon asked, struggling in vain to pull any of her paws from the wood of the desk. Just then the familiar bell rang, signalling the end of class. Otto snatched his bag from the floor and ran from the room, the rest of the class following closely behind.

Out in the hallway they couldn't contain themselves any longer and the air was lit with the sounds of raucous laughter.

"Did you see the look on her face?" Shelby gasped, fits of giggling shaking her body.

"I am so dead," Otto said with a grin. "But it was definitely worth it."

"Someone should go help her." Laura said, trying not to smile, as they turned around the corner of the passageway.

"That wouldn't be wise," Wing replied, frowning. "She will not take kindly to being pulled from the desk."

"Well the least we could do is actually tell one of the other staff."

"Nah. Who in their right mind would want to go up against a cat?" Otto asked, stepping into their accommodation block.

"Will you be knowing where Ms Leon is being?" Franz said, running up to the group.

"Yeah actually," Shelby said, draping her arm around his shoulder. "She's in her usual room."

"Oh, thank you very much. I am having detention with her and I am not wanting to be late." And with that the ample figure of Franz, walked out of the atrium and down the corridor.

"Shouldn't we warn him?" Laura asked with a frown.

"No." Shelby and Otto said, simultaneously.

"Where would be the fun in that." The latter continued.

"You two are too cruel." Wing observed

"And that's why you love us so much." Shelby said, patting him on the cheek. "Now come on. Let's put our stuff away so that we can go get something to eat. I'm starving!" The two of them walked off in the direction of the stairs but Otto didn't move. A beeping was coming from his blackbox and he flicked it open to see Nero face, looking worried. Laura leaned over his shoulder to see who was calling.

"Yes sir?" Otto asked nervously.

"I need you to come down to my office after lessons. You're not in trouble in any way. I just need to have a little chat with you. Make sure you're not late." The screen turned black as the headmaster cut the transmission.

"Well that wasn't weird." Laura commented. "What do you think he wants you for?"

"I have no idea whatsoever. But it can't be good."

"What makes you say that?"

Otto sighed, slumping into a nearby seat. "I don't know. Just a feeling I've got."

"Want me to come with you after lessons?" Laura asked, looking away towards the waterfall at the far end. "You know. For support."

"Yeah. I don't see why not. Whatever he's gonna tell me, he can tell you too. Chances are I'd tell you guys later anyway."

Laura's blackbox suddenly began bleeping.

"Yes?" She asked, flicking it open. H.I.V.E. mind's face appeared on the little screen, looking anxious.

"Go to the hangar bay and climb onto the shroud that's being prepped for takeoff. Make sure Otto goes with you."

"Why?" Laura asked in alarm. "Is the school under attack?"

"No. But Otto needs to be on that shroud and I'd prefer it if you went with him. Don't worry about getting caught. The pilot thinks that Nero has consented to you leaving the island for today."

"But...? How...?"

"I believe that there will be an attack on a boy whom it is imperative is not hurt. The boy was going to be brought in today but Raven cannot make it back here in time. You two need to go and get him."

"And why would he be getting attacked? Why not tell Nero?" Otto asked over Laura's shoulder.

"Because those attacking him are from G.L.O.V.E. G.L.O.V.E. operatives who have mistaken him for you."

"You didn't answer my question. Why not tell Nero?" Otto said.

"Nero would send Francisco, who in turn would cause bloodshed that could be avoided. Much better if you two were to go in alone and bring him back without any fuss."

"Well you can count me in." Otto said with a smile.

"But you're supposed to go to Nero at the end of the day. And it'll be dangerous." Laura said.

"So? Nero can wait. And since when have we been a stranger to danger."

"Laura?" The A.I. inquired.

She looked up at the boy beside her who had stuck out his bottom lip and was trying to look sweet and innocent.

"If it means I get a holiday from this place then okay. When do we leave?" She said with a sigh.

"In five minutes."

**An Hour Later****

>

>Nero walked into the communications centre and towards a technician who was sat at a nearby console.<p>

"It's been over an hour and you still haven't contacted Raven?" He asked, a touch of impatience creeping into his voice. The other man frowned, a look of confusion on his face.

"We contacted Raven an hour ago exactly. She said she couldn't make it back here in time for today. H.I.V.E. mind was supposed to tell you."

Now it was Nero's turn to look confused. "I haven't been told anything. Get H.I.V.E. mind on screen."

The man tapped away at the keyboard in front of him for a moment and a few seconds later the monitor on the wall lit up with the A.I.'s blue wireframe face.

"What can I do for you Dr Nero?" He asked, smiling.

"Why didn't you tell me about Raven's call earlier?" Nero asked, anger evident in his tone.

"I was not aware that Raven had..."

"Don't play games with me! Just answer my question." Nero barked, pacing backwards and forwards across the communications centre.

H.I.V.E. mind looked down. "I wanted Otto to go and collect the boy."

"What!" Nero asked in surprise. He'd stopped pacing. Then suddenly a troublesome thought snapped him out of his astonishment. "Where is Otto?"

"He is in London if I am not mistaken." H.I.V.E. mind replied calmly.

"You didn't?" Nero asked in shock. "How the heck did you get him out of the school?"

"I simply told him that a boy needed saving. A boy who was going to be attacked and would die if they didn't go."

"And he just believed you!"

"I also said to him that if I told you Raven couldn't go, you would send Francisco instead and the boy would most definitely die. The pilot was a lot easier to convince. A little bit of hypnotic gas and he would do almost anything for me."

"Get Otto back here NOW!" Nero shouted. "Do you know what would happen if he found out about this?" A few of the technicians in the room looked up at their boss a little startled but he ignored them.

"He would know the truth." The A.I. said, genuinely confused.

"This could have severe repercussions. I want the boy back..." Nero suddenly stopped. Something H.I.V.E. mind had said was bothering him.

"You said the boy was going to get attacked." He whispered.

"I was lying." The A.I. replied.

"The disciples," Nero said. "If they find Otto now he's dead."

H.I.V.E. mind suddenly looked worried. "Maybe I did the wrong thing."

"That, I would say, is an understatement. Can you get Otto back here within the next half hour?"

"I fear that it may already be too late for that." H.I.V.E. mind said, his voice grave.

"Meaning?" Nero asked with sudden dread.

The A.I.'s face was suddenly replaced by a scene of destruction. What looked like several buildings had been completely obliterated. Bodies lay scattered across the rubble, burned and bloody. A fire raged among the ruins, searching for more fuel. Screams and cries could be heard emanating from the smoke that hung over the street.

"Please tell me Otto was nowhere near that." Nero whispered, sinking into a nearby chair.

"I'm afraid he was at the centre of it along with the boy and..."

"And...?" Nero snarled.

"And Laura. I've lost contact with them."

3. Chapter 3

****WOO - HOO! Roll out the red carpet as here comes Chapter 3! This is for those of you who continue to read. And for that I thank you graciously. I really appreciate your reviews and can't wait to read what you think about this next instalment. So without further ado...****

****ENJOY!****

****(Then when you reach the end of the page click the little link and give me your views on today's chapter. All comments are welcome! :D)****

****Chapter 3****

Half An Hour Earlier****
>**

>"Can I have two double scoop, mint chocolate chip ice - creams please?" Otto asked the woman behind the counter. Laura was waiting outside, enjoying the sunshine while it lasted.<p>

The trip to London had been uneventful. The two had changed into some clothes that H.I.V.E. mind had provided for them. Otto had chosen a black shirt, black combats and funnily enough, a black hooded jacket. Laura had gone for a checked red shirt, blue jeans and a black baseball cap. The pilot had even been kind enough to give them some money, should they get hungry.

"That'll be £1.50." The woman said, holding out the two cones. Otto pulled the change from his pocket and dropped it onto the counter with a chink. Then he carefully took the ice - creams from her hands and walked out into the bustling street.

"Here you go." Otto said to Laura, and she gratefully took the cone from his hand.

"Nero is gonna kill us you know." She mumbled around a mouthful, as they set off for the police station.

"And? I reckon we need a holiday. When was the last time we saw sunshine?" Otto said with a grin.

"About half a year back when we nearly got killed." Laura wasn't smiling.

"Come on. You know as well as I that H.I.V.E. mind was lying about all that attacking business. We're in no danger whatsoever." Laura still didn't look convinced.

"I don't know. Why would he send us to go and get this boy? We don't even know his name."

"Now that's where you're wrong. His name is Richard Manville. H.I.V.E. mind told me while you were sleeping in the shroud."

"Richard?" Laura asked, a little dubious.

"Yeah. What, don't you believe me? Though don't call him that to his face. He prefers to be called Rick." Otto said, taking a bite out of his ice - cream cone. They paused as they came to a crossing. Several cars zoomed past and a baby began crying somewhere down the street. The two of them waited until the little green man sign flashed up and then walked across the road towards the building situated not far from them.

"Well I still don't see why it has to be us that gets him. Why not Raven? Or Francisco? It doesn't make any sense." Laura continued, licking her fingers clean of the last vestiges of ice - cream.

"Think about it." Otto said stopping on the pavement outside the police station, his own dessert finished. "Would you have preferred teenagers, like us, to come and recruit you to H.I.V.E.? Or a trained assassin who would knock you out with a sleeper?"

"But we _were_ _knocked out by a trained assassin welding a sleeper."

Laura said confused.

"Exactly. And did you like it? No of course not. So why should Rick." Otto said.

"Yeah, but Nero would never allow it." Laura countered.

"Oh come on. We're here already. Okay, maybe we made a mistake by doing what H.I.V.E. mind asked us to. Maybe we'll get punished for it. Maybe it was stupid of us to leave the school. But the point is that we did. It doesn't matter why we're here now. That's in the past. Let's just get Rick and get back to the shroud. Then we'll worry about H.I.V.E. mind's motives later. And besides, he's our friend. I would've still come if he hadn't given us a reason why. We owe him." Otto argued.

"Fine then. But how do you expect to get Rick out of there?" Laura asked, nodding towards the building behind him. "He's probably locked away in some cell and I doubt that the cops will just let us leave with him in tow. What did he do to get arrested anyway?"

"No idea." Otto said. "H.I.V.E. mind wouldn't say. But he did tell me that he's changed the records so that they say he's to be picked up by his brother and sister."

"Oh. Well that's full proof." Laura said sarcastically.

"Come on." Otto said, rolling his eyes. He climbed up the short flight of steps to the push doors and strode inside, Laura following behind him.

The entrance hall was far from quiet. Policemen jostled around, carrying paperwork. Members of the public stood complaining about the lack of assistance. Dogs barked from a room off to one side. Phones rang constantly, filling the air with all sorts of tones.

"Well this will be quick." Laura muttered to herself. Otto didn't hear. He was busy calculating the fastest way to get seen by the man at a desk in the left corner. Without a word he pushed past the other people and Laura grabbed onto his arm, trying not to be left behind.

"Excuse me. I know you're very busy. But I'm here to collect my brother. And well something tells me he won't be getting out of here very soon if this queue has anything to go by." Otto said interrupting the woman speaking to the cop at the desk.

"Look kid. You're just gonna have to wait with everyone else. Now get to the back of the line."

"No. My brother Rick has done nothing wrong. He shouldn't have to wait here a minute longer than he has to." Otto said, firmly.

"Wait. Who did you say you're brother was?" The man said, looking at Otto properly for the first time.

"Richard Manville. We were told to come and pick him up." Otto said, feeling a prickling sensation begin to crawl up his spine. Something wasn't right. He could tell from the look on the man's face.

"You definitely got a wrong call then because Richard Manville is not leaving this building until his court date." The cop said, eyes narrowing. Otto frowned. Then suddenly the man shouted over to some cops standing near the door.

"Grab these two!"

Otto's eyes widened and he spun around just as the first policeman reached him. The cop pushed him into the desk and pulled his arms behind his back, fastening them together with cuffs. Beside him Laura was being given the same treatment.

"We haven't done anything wrong!" Otto shouted trying to fight back. He was pulled away from the desk and pushed down a corridor. Behind him he could hear Laura stumbling as she was forced to walk.

Otto's mind raced. He tried to think of a way that they could escape but there was no way he could do anything with these handcuffs on. Then suddenly he was being searched for weapons. The cops took both of their blackboxes and threw them into separate cells. They left soon after, confident that the two couldn't escape.

Otto couldn't see how things could get much worse. The only consolation was that they'd been released from the cuffs before being put into the prisons.

"Laura! Are you alright?"

"Yeah." She said.

The boy sighed and leaned against the wall. What were they going to do know?

A sudden scraping and rattling sound punctuated the air. Otto frowned. There was a squeak and then the door of the cell beside his, swung open and crashed into the wall with a clang.

"Need some help?" Laura said, smiling as she walked out of her own prison.

"Shelby's been giving you lessons hasn't she?" Otto said, grinning with relief.

Laura didn't reply. Instead she held up some keys, jingling them in her hands.

"You stole them?" Otto said in disbelief.

"We do go to a school for villains, remember. I should think the teachers will be very proud of me." She replied, fiddling about with the lock on Otto's cell. The key turned with a click and the boy pushed open the door, walking out into the hallway.

"Which cell do you reckon Rick will be in?" He asked, looking down the length of the corridor.

"We just got arrested and that's all you can think about." Laura said shaking her head. "We need to concentrate on getting out of here."

"Well we can still take Rick. It won't make our job any harder or easier."

"Says you." Laura mumbled. Otto ignored her and took the keys, searching for a cell home to some teenager.

Laura glanced at the room opposite her and gasped, her eyes widening in disbelief. She suddenly realised why H.I.V.E. mind had wanted them to get Rick. Why he had wanted Otto to get Rick.

The boy opposite her, put a finger to his lips and gestured to the baseball cap still on her head. She pulled it off and quickly checking to make sure that Otto wasn't looking, threaded it through the bars. Rick took it and put it on his own head, simultaneously pulling the hood of his jacket over the top. Then he pulled out a pair of sunglasses and put them on.

"Otto! I think I've found him!" Laura called. The white haired boy walked back over and looked into the cell.

"Are you Rick?" He asked. The boy inside nodded. Otto frowned. He looked strangely familiar but with his glasses on, Otto couldn't tell where he'd seen him before.

"Right then. Open the door. I'll look to see if I can find a way out." Otto said, handing the keys over to Laura. She stepped forward and undid the lock, allowing Rick to walk out of the cell.

"Thanks." He whispered to her.

"I didn't do it for you. I did it for Otto. And as soon as we're out of here I'm gonna tell him." She whispered back at him

"This way!" Otto called from around the corner.

The two of them walked over to join him at another cell door, blocking the exit from the corridor. There he took the keys from Laura and opened the lock. Then they cautiously looked around the corner of the next hallway and Otto gestured over to a window that opened onto the back courtyard.

Rick walked over to the window and pulled on it. The glass wouldn't move. He lifted his foot and kicked at it. The window didn't even shudder from the impact.

Suddenly there was the smashing of glass and a wailing pierced the air. Otto had triggered the fire alarm. He tugged at the window and it slid up effortlessly.

"Fire exit number one." Otto said with a smile. "Ladies first I believe." Laura took the offered hand and climbed up onto the window sill, jumping out onto the concrete yard. Rick followed suit and Otto went last. Then they immediately headed for the gate at the back.

It opened without any problems and the trio walked down the alley behind the police station. As they reached the main road, Otto breathed a sigh of relief and grinned at Laura.

A second later a concussive wave knocked them to the ground, a sonic boom ringing through the air.

****So guys get the mouse ready for what you're going to do next!****

4. Chapter 4

****No need to wait any longer, as here I bring you Chapter 4! Thank you for all the reviews that I have received so far. It is always nice to see that people do care to make a special person (hint, hint) happy. :D****

****So I ask you humbly to continue clicking the little button at the end and as always, give your spectacular comments, whether awe - inspiring or critical to yours truly.****

****Thanks! Now...****

****ENJOY!****

****Chapter 4****

Screams echoed through the thick black smoke that pervaded the air. Rubble lay strewn across the street, disfiguring the landscape. The smell of burning floated along on the breeze, the crackle of flames evidence of some raging fire. Among all of this the sounds of sirens could be heard steadily growing louder.

Otto groaned where he lay. There was a pounding in his head and he could feel the rough ground beneath his cheek. His whole body felt battered and bruised, like a giant had kicked him about. Ever so slowly his eyes flickered open.

In the limited view that his position afforded, Otto could see upturned cars, flames licking their framework. Glass was scattered over the floor from the windows that had shattered from the sonic boom of the bomb. People staggered about, dazed and confused, calling for help.

A metre away a body lay on its side, facing the opposite direction. Otto grimaced as he slowly pushed himself up onto his hands and knees. For a moment the world spun and he had to shut his eyes against the nausea that washed over him. Then taking a deep breath, the boy shuffled along towards the figure.

As he reached the body, Otto held out a tentative hand and prodded the person. They didn't respond. Grabbing onto the figure's shoulder, he heaved and the face was revealed. But it was unrecognisable. Their features had been burned off, their face a fleshy mess of blackened skin.

Otto flinched back, turning away and bringing his hand to his mouth. His body heaved as it tried to upend the contents of his stomach. The boy's breathing became fast and shallow, as he fought to keep from going into shock.

"Otto!" The voice seemed to echo in the smoke and he spun around on his knees, trying to identify the direction of the speaker.

"I'm over here!" There was no reply.

A sharp pain suddenly shot through Otto's skull and he ducked down hands gripping his head. The moment passed and when he pulled his hands away, they were wet with blood. He cautiously explored his face and found that there was a deep gash near his left temple. Pain shot through the wound every time the wind blew passed but thankfully it seemed to have crusted over.

Otto wiped his hands on his trousers and slowly climbed to his feet. He stumbled slightly, but managed to quickly regain his balance. Then he glanced up as he heard the unmistakable crunch of gravel.

"Who's there?" He called, apprehensively.

The silhouette of a person suddenly loomed out of the smoke and Otto snatched up the nearest weapon available to him; a lead pipe. He held it like a baseball bat and gripped it with two hands, ready to swing it at the figure if necessary. But as the smoke cleared, his eyes widened, his mouth fell open and the pipe fell from his hands, clattering as it hit the floor.

Otto staggered backwards. He felt like someone had just punched him in the gut. The familiar feeling he'd had when he'd first seen Rick, began to make sense.

"I must have hit my head harder than I thought." Otto muttered to himself, looking away.

"No you definitely didn't. Because I'm real. You weren't supposed to find out until later." Rick said, frowning.

"How the heck can you exist?" Otto asked in astonishment, avoiding the other boy's eyes. He was looking anywhere but at him.

"What? You didn't really think that you were the first clone to be grown by Overlord, did you?" Rick said with mild interest.

Otto's head snapped up and his eyes finally met Rick's. They were the same pale blue as his. And Rick's face. It was the complete mirror image of his own face. They were identical in almost every way, except one. Rick's hair was long and brown, while his own was short and snow white.

Otto opened his mouth to say something but Rick got there first.

"Can we leave this till later? I'll bet that whoever dropped that bomb will not be happy to see us still alive." Otto just nodded, dumbstruck.

Rick turned to walk away from the scene of carnage that still surrounded them. Otto moved to follow him. It felt like that bomb had been dropped a lifetime ago. He could barely put one foot in front of the other. Questions buzzed around his head like bees around their nest. They drowned out the real world and its pain and destruction and chaos. But one word refused to let him float away on the tide of emotions that had overwhelmed him. _Laura._

"Wait!" Otto called out. Rick stopped and turned around. They'd almost reached the corner of the bombed street and had been about to

surreptitiously step out into the crowd that had gathered there, where the smoke thinned out.

"What?" He asked.

"We have to find Laura." Otto said, turning back towards the street he'd woken up in.

"No we can't." Rick grabbed onto the other boy's hood and pulled backwards, dragging him over to the crowd.

"Let go!" Otto cried out. He twisted around and kicked Rick in the back of the knees, which loosened his grip. Then he wrenched his hood from the boy's grasp and sprinted back into the cloud of grey ash, heading for where he thought Laura might have been.

"Otto!" The voice came from somewhere off to his right and he stopped to listen carefully, the smoke making it almost impossible to see anything past a metre.

"I'm over here!" He called back, squinting into the dark cloud that surrounded him.

"Got you!" Rick said, suddenly appearing from the smoke. He gripped Otto's arm and pulled him in a different direction, while Otto fought to escape.

An unexpected downdraft of air slammed into the two of them, nearly knocking them over. It cleared the cloud of smog that filled the air and revealed Laura standing not far from them, struggling to stay upright.

"Laura!" Otto shouted, trying to walk over to her.

"Get down!" Rick screamed, shoving the other boy to the ground and landing on top of him. The space above them was suddenly ripped apart as a spray of bullets tore through the air. Otto rolled to the left and Rick to the right, the heavy machine fire, chewing up the concrete between them.

"Run!" Laura yelled over the sound of rotor blades, diving behind the remains of a wall not far from them. There was a shimmering in the air and suddenly a helicopter appeared, hovering above them, several armed men hanging out of the open hatchway. Otto pushed himself to his feet and ran over to Rick, dragging him behind the safety of some ruins. The line of bullets followed him, hammering insistently into the stonework.

"We have to get out of here." Rick said faintly, trying to sit up. His right leg was slippery with blood, oozing from the wounds made by the stray shells that had hit him.

"No freakin' kidding." Otto said sarcastically, applying pressure to the bullet holes. Rick gasped in pain, gritting his teeth.

"Don't be such a wimp. It looks worse than it really is. At least the bullets passed clean through." Otto said pulling off his jacket and wrapping it around the other boy's leg.

"And that's meant to reassure me is it?" Rick asked, the corner of

his mouth twitching upwards. He grunted as Otto pulled the jacket tight before, knotting it.

"I don't know how long that will last. But we need to get you to a hospital." He said, wiping his hands on his trousers.

"And what makes you think I'm going to make it that far?" Rick said seriously, looking Otto in the eyes.

"Let me deal with that. You just relax." The other boy replied with a smile.

Laura suddenly rounded the corner of their small piece of wall, covered in dust and breathing hard.

"The helicopter's coming this way. They're going to fly over us so that we can't just turn around the corner when they come. We'll be trapped. We have got to move now." Laura said breathlessly.

"What? With my leg? I don't think we're going anywhere. But Otto reassures me that he has a plan." Rick said looking at the other boy. Laura was also looking at him, trying to gauge how he was coping with the fact that Rick was identical to him. But it didn't seem to be bothering the boy. Then again they were under attack at the moment. Better to think about that later and concentrate on surviving.

"Yeah. Right, stay here. I'll catch up with you guys later." Otto said with a grin and suddenly stood up into the path of the hovering helicopter. He could see that the crowd had dispersed, fleeing in all directions. Looking at the air ship, he gave the men on board the aircraft a little wave and ran to the side, towards an upturned car. The armed operatives quickly shook away their confusion and trained their guns on the receding form of their target.

Otto dived for cover behind the vehicle just as the men fired, the bullets shredding the framework. He stopped to catch his breath and glancing back at his friends, gave them the thumbs up. They both looked at him like he was crazy. But his plan had worked. In the moment of confusion the men had forgotten that there were still two more people behind the piece of wall that Otto had so recently vacated.

"Right." He whispered to himself. The operative's attention may have been shifted from his friends but now they would be concentrating on getting him.

"Hey! Over here!" Laura shouted, running for the cover of another car. The helicopter spun around, hovering drunkenly as the pilot fought to keep control. Several of the men fell from the opening and landed in the rubble below, crying out in pain as some bones were broken. Those unharmed rose quickly to their feet, training their weapons on the car that Laura hid behind.

There was a skittering sound and Otto glanced down. Lying in the rocks beside him was a gun. He looked back in the direction that it had come from and saw Rick gesturing for him to use it. The men that had fallen had opened fire on the car that Laura was using for protection and were circling around it in an attempt to trap her. Those still left in the helicopter were watching and waiting for the

girl to break cover.

Otto picked up the gun and slid out the magazine, counting the number of bullets. Then he stood up, slipping the round back into the weapon and releasing the safety.

He took in a deep breath and the world seemed to slow down. Otto could see the precise angle at which he'd have to fire the gun in order for his plan to work. He lifted the weapon up to eye level and aimed, intense concentration etched on his face.

Then he fired.

The bullet soared through the air at a phenomenal speed and hit the propeller with a crunch. The wind whistled through the newly made hole and the helicopter lurched as it began to lose upthrust. It jerked forwards towards the car Laura hid behind, and the men on the ground ran for cover as it's shadow passed over them.

There was a screeching of metal and the rotor's gave way, the main body of the helicopter dropping away onto the roof of the car. It exploded into a fiery ball, consuming both vehicles. Debris flew through the air and Otto ducked down to avoid being hit by any stray pieces. Not that far away he could see Rick peering around the corner of his wall, gazing mesmerised at the carnage.

A tap on his shoulder sent Rick jumping into the air. He spun around and a smile lit up his face as he saw Laura standing there, uninjured.

"How did you...?" He said, trailing off as Otto walked over to join them.

"Nice shot." Laura said, grinning at him.

"What can I say? I'm a natural at these sorts of things." He said, spreading his arms.

"Yeah. You keep telling yourself that."

"Where did you get the gun from?" Otto asked Rick, suddenly serious.

"Stole it from the police station didn't I. Laura isn't the only one with fast fingers you know."

"Well then. We need to get out of here, before the authorities arrive. And then you have a lot of explaining to do." Otto said, looking sternly at the other boy.

"Of course. Give us a hand then." Rick said, offering an arm to each of them. Laura and Otto looked at each other and sighed. This day was getting longer and longer by the minute.

5. Chapter 5

****Drum roll please! Today I introduce you to Chapter 5! Thank you to everyone who has read and reviewed my Fan Fic and who continues to do so. I really appreciate it and could not ask for anything more but**

for those who don't review to at least click the little button at the end and send something to acknowledge my work. Thanks!****

>**

>**Now I don't want to keep you waiting, so...****

>**

>**ENJOY!**

Chapter 5

Rick screamed as a stab of pain shot through his leg. The bullet holes that had so recently peppered his calf, had been stitched up with thread. Laura had been working for the past hour to ensure that they had been sealed up properly in order to minimise infection and was now pouring an antiseptic fluid over the wounds.

When she was satisfied that the injuries had been washed thoroughly, Laura put down the bottle and picked up a roll of bandage, wrapping it tightly around the boy's leg. Rick continued to gasp and grit his teeth, as she worked, refusing to look at the amount of blood on the floor. His face was pale and he felt weak and faint.

"There. All done." Laura said with a sigh, cutting the bandage from the roll. Rick opened his eyes and inspected her handiwork.

"Not bad." He muttered.

"Excuse me?" She snapped.

"I meant thank you." Rick said quickly.

Just then the door opened and Otto walked in, carrying a bag from which a delicious smell wafted. He sat down beside the two of them and pulled out a parcel from the bag, unrolling it to reveal a portion of crisp hot chips.

"Tuck in everyone." He said with a smile, before helping himself to a handful of the chips. Rick dived straight into it, having not eaten for several hours. Laura got up to wash her hands of the boy's blood with a bottle of water, before joining the other two and eating the chips just as greedily as them.

They were sat in an abandoned house, the doors and windows boarded up, not far from the scene of carnage that had been caused by the bomb. Otto had had to pull down some of the pieces of wood nailed to the windows to let in the only light coming from the lamp post outside, as it had gone dark. The sounds of sirens and cars could be heard going past as people continued with their everyday lives.

"So? Going to explain why you look like me?" Otto asked innocently, leaning back on one hand. He absently ran his fingers over the stitches that Laura had made on the gash near his temple.

Rick paused with a chip halfway to his mouth, looking at the other boy carefully. Laura had also stopped eating and was watching the two of them with bated breath.

"Right. Where to start?" He muttered, finishing the chip in his hand.

"At the beginning usually works." Laura said, folding her legs beneath her and cracking open a can of coke.

"Okay." Rick said nodding. "Well then. You're not the first. And neither am I."

"First? What you mean like there are more clones?" Otto said, eyes wide in shock.

"Of course. But they're all dead now." Rick said, licking his fingers.

"That's just even more confusing." Laura said, frowning. She took a gulp of her drink and passed it over to Otto.

"Yeah, but only because I haven't told you the full story yet. Look. Basically Overlord wanted a new body so he cloned himself several times at any one point. He'd have three cloning experiments running simultaneously just in case one or two of them failed." Rick said, wincing as he shifted his leg into a more comfortable position.

"You know about Overlord?" Otto asked incredulously, interrupting the boy.

"Of course I know about Overlord. Now will you let me finish my story?" Rick said. He waited until Otto had nodded before continuing.

"Every experiment failed. The highly advanced computer chip that Overlord wanted to implant and integrate into the clones would only end up killing them. Until, that is, I came along.

"The computer chip did not integrate with my brain, but it didn't kill me either. Overlord wasn't overly pleased with that. He now had a baby boy with a computer chip in his head who was useless to him. So he ordered that I be killed." By now Rick was staring off into the distance, eyes unfocused. Laura and Otto glanced at each other before looking back towards the boy.

"Only, one of the scientists took pity on me. They saved my life and I was put in an orphanage. Along with a backup copy of all the ongoing experiments Overlord was participating in. Because you see, that megalomaniac artificial intelligence didn't know that I had survived.

"Every now and then, the scientist who had given me back my life updated the backup disc. It was kept within a safe, and the man left instructions to let me see what was in it once I turned sixteen. I'm assuming he was killed because he disappeared two months after I was born."

"I'm guessing that you're sixteen then." Otto said. "Seeing as though you know all this."

"Well I only found out two months ago." Rick said with a smile.

"Two months?"

"Yeah. I read the backup and it told me about the experiment and that

all of them had failed except one. That one was you." Rick explained. He shook his head at the shocked expressions on their faces and continued. "It also told me about H.I.V.E and G.L.O.V.E and that you would be taken to the school for protection and education, before being wiped clean and replaced by Overlord." An awkward silence fell over the group as he finished.

"Well if you wanted to warn us you're a bit late for that." Otto finally said with a faint smile. He held out his hand and after a slight hesitation, Rick shook it. "Nice to meet you, my long lost big brother."

"A pleasure." Rick replied, grinning. He let go of the boy's hand and leant back. "Now, is one of you going to explain why we were nearly blown up?"

Laura shrugged her shoulders and looked to Otto who was frowning.

"My best guess is that someone wanted to silence you. I mean when you were arrested, we couldn't have been the only ones to realise that you looked like me. Chances are that the operation was led by the Disciples." He explained.

"And they are?"

Otto paused for a moment. "The Disciples are an organisation set up to help Overlord. They basically believed in what he did."

"And what about Overlord himself? You said that it was too late to warn you guys so I'm guessing that you've already met." Rick asked.

"Yeah." Otto said sighing. "We've met. He's tried to kill me several times already. And he's dead now. Thanks to a friend." His tone implied that he did not want to continue that line of discussion.

"Are you going to tell us why you were arrested?" Laura said, quickly changing the subject. Otto smiled gratefully at her.

"H.I.V.E is a school for villains right? Well I needed some way of grasping your attention. And the only way I could see that happening was if I did something villainous." Rick explained.

"And that was?" Laura asked curiously.

Rick grinned. "I tried to blow up the Houses of Parliament. Guy Fawkes style."

"Really?" Otto asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Yeah. Of course." Rick said. "What don't you believe me?"

"No. We definitely believe you. It's just that you seemed pleased about it." Otto said getting to his feet.

"And why shouldn't I be?" Rick asked, as Laura and Otto helped him to stand up.

"Well for one, it's been done before. Not exactly unique is it. And two, I've heard more impressive stories." Otto replied, placing their belongings into some bags, while the other boy leaned on Laura for support. They began to make their way towards the door, Rick limping along.

"Like?" The boy asked.

"Well." Otto said with a smile. "Mine for a start. I made the Prime Minister moon the audience." He opened the door and walked out into the hallway. Rick frowned.

"That was you?" He asked, shocked.

"Of course. Who else could it have been?" Otto said, grinning. "Now come on. It's going to take us long enough with your leg, trying to get back to the shroud."

"Assuming it's still there." Laura added helpfully.

* * *

><p>"Dr Nero?" The technician at the desk called. He was sat at a console in the Communications Centre, trying to find out what had happened when the bomb went off at the police station.<p>

"Yes?" The headteacher snapped, striding over to the man at the computer. "What is it?"

"The shroud that was sent to drop off the students is on its way back." He replied.

"How far out is it?" Nero asked, looking over the technician's shoulder.

"About ten minutes sir." The man replied, tapping away at the keyboard in front of him.

"Well are the students on board?" Nero asked, hopes rising.

"I'm not sure sir. We can't seem to get the pilot on radio. We have no communication with them at all. Do you want us to let the shroud land in the hangar bay?"

"And why wouldn't we?" Nero asked, frowning.

"It could be a trap sir."

"Well I'm willing to take that chance. If the students are on board, one of them may be hurt."

"And if they aren't?" The technician asked.

Nero sighed. "Send Francisco down with a platoon of security guards. Have them surround the shroud as it lands. But they are not to engage unless they know that the students are definitely not on board and that hostiles are."

****Today my friends I release Chapter 6! Thank you to everyone who read and reviewed the previous chapters and I ask you humbly to continue doing so. :D******

>I'd also just like to say that I do except anonymous reviews if you're feeling a bit mysterious.******

>**

>ENJOY!****

****Chapter 6****

Nero stood in the hangar bay, watching as the platoon of men under Francisco's control, spread out in a circle around the landing pad. They were dressed in their usual orange jumpsuits and were all armed with sleeper guns. Max had not been willing to give them access to any lethal weapons as he wasn't entirely convinced that they would fall under attack. If the shroud did contain the students, he did not want them to be subjected to gunfire. Though it was odd that the shroud still hadn't come over the comms to announce its arrival.

"Is this really necessary?" Francisco asked, standing beside him.

"Yes. We haven't been able to communicate with anyone on board. The technician's assure me that it may just be a glitch but it's best to be prepared. We still have no idea who dropped that bomb, other than that they must have worked for the disciples." Nero explained.

"Well I hope for our sake's that it is just the students returning."

"And when," Max asked with a smile, "... has it ever been that easy?"

They were suddenly distracted by the doors up above rumbling open. Francisco barked out some last minute commands and moved into position as the air around them picked up in a wild storm. The sound of rotor blades could be heard thumping around the cavern. Every one of the men in jumpsuits raised their weapons at the centre of the hangar bay but the shroud did not uncloak. Nero frowned. He suddenly had a bad feeling about where this was going.

Off to the right, one of the security personnel collapsed, clutching at his throat. The same thing happened at the other end of the cavern and it became increasingly clear that they were no longer alone.

"Fall back!" Francisco screamed, just as something slammed into his chest. The man hurtled backwards, crashing with a sickening crunch onto the stairs. Nero watched in shock as more and more of his men were cut down.

Max spun around and ran, as the one sided battle raged below. He pulled out his blackbox and flipped it open in one fluid motion. H.I.V.E. mind's blue wireframe face appeared, worry mapped across his features.

"The security cameras in the hangar bay are offline sir." He said in his synthetic voice.

"We're under attack! Close the hangar bay doors immediately! Initiate a school wide lockdown!" Nero shouted, leaping up the stairs, two at a time, as the last security guard fell. The man made it halfway up the stairs before a sleeper stun pulse hit him in the back. He collapsed forwards onto his front, out cold.

* * *

><p>A yellow taxi pulled up to the pavement, it's engine slowing from a deep throaty growl into a mere whisper. It was parked on the outskirts of a silent dock, the water lapping gently at the wooden pier. Shipping containers lined the yard beyond the wire mesh fence, tall and forbidding in the moonlight. Giant cranes stood motionless on the edges of the dock, their shadows long and menacing. A lone cloud passed over the moon and the yard was plunged into darkness.<p>

The back doors of the taxi clicked open and three figures climbed out. They walked onto the pavement and after a pause the taxi pulled away into the night, it's engines revving.

"So where is this shroud again?" Rick asked, dropping his hood. Both him and his brother had had to keep their faces hidden from the taxi driver as they were too well known now because of his arrest.

"In there." Otto replied, peering out from beneath his baseball cap. He gestured towards the shipping yard and Rick gave him a dubious look.

"Look. I didn't choose the landing spot. So don't look at me." Otto said, shrugging. He stuck his hands into his pockets and began trudging towards the left of the yard where the fence was covered by some bushes. Laura followed behind him and after a slight hesitation Rick did the same, limping considerably.

As Otto reached the bushes he pulled them away to reveal a hole cut into the fence just big enough for them to fit through but small enough to be covered by the wild plants that grew alongside it. He bent down and stepped through the gap, his jacket catching at the loose edges of the mesh. After a minute or two all three of them stood on the other side, looking over towards the shipping containers.

"Now. We landed over there." Otto said, pointing over to the right. "Or was it over there." He continued, frowning and pointing in the opposite direction. Laura rolled her eyes.

"No you idiot. The shroud landed behind the warehouse." She corrected.

"Did it?" Otto asked confused. "Everything looks different in the dark."

"I think that's the whole point." Rick said sarcastically. "Lead the way Laura. I don't trust young Sherlock Holmes over here."

The three of them crept silently through the yard towards the left where a building loomed threateningly, the injured of their party moving at a much slower pace. They ducked behind a shipping container as the front door came into view and cautiously made their way down

the side of the warehouse, their shadows thrown against the wall as the moon slid out from behind a cloud. With mounting excitement the trio turned the corner and stepped into the small area behind the building.

"Are you sure it was this dock that you landed in?" Rick asked leaning against the back wall of the warehouse, sweat dripping into his eyes. He was breathing heavily and his face was pale.

"The shroud can turn invisible, smart..." Otto began, turning to face his brother. A frown creased his features as he saw the state of Rick. "Hey are you alright?"

The other boy waved his hand, dismissing the question and slid down the wall onto his backside. Laura, who was watching with concern, tugged on Otto's sleeve and pulled him over to one side.

"We need to get him medical help. Looking at the state he's in I'd say that his wounds are probably infected. The antiseptic fluid didn't work." Laura whispered.

"Well we can't exactly take him to hospital. As soon as he gets better they'd arrest him again. He did try to blow up the Houses of Parliament after all. That can be seen as treason. He'll be lucky if they don't execute him." Otto said, rubbing at his forehead.

"Then the only option left is H.I.V.E." The girl replied, looking over at Rick. His eyes were closed and he appeared to be sleeping.

"Yeah I agree. There's one small problem though."

"And that is?" Laura asked, folding her arms.

"There's no shroud to take us back." Otto said, gesturing to the centre of the little yard.

"What?" Laura spun around and assessed the ground. If the shroud was invisible there would still have been indents in the gravel where the landing gear would have been. But the floor was smooth.

"Maybe the pilot parked it somewhere else." She said, turning back to face Otto.

"No." He said, shaking his head. "I can't feel the electrical signatures of the shroud anywhere. It's not here."

"Going to tell me what you're talking about?" Rick called from behind. The two of them walked over to him and Laura sat down on the floor.

"What's wrong?" He asked, seeing the expressions on their faces. Otto seemed distracted, gazing up at the back wall of the building.

"Well it's to do with the... Hey what are you doing?" Laura asked, watching as Otto placed a foot on a drain pipe running up the side of the warehouse.

"Nothing. Just talk to Rick for a couple of minutes. I'll be back before you know it." He replied, grinning at them. Then he reached up

and his other foot left the ground as he began scaling the wall. One hand after the other, he climbed higher, aiming towards a window two stories up.

"He's lost it hasn't he?" Rick said, watching the white haired boy ascend.

"No. He's always like that. You better start getting used to it now that you'll be coming to H.I.V.E." Laura replied, eyes aloft. She watched as Otto reached the window and pulled himself onto the ledge. After a few seconds he slid the frame up and slipped into the room on the other side.

"So are you and him together then?" Rick asked, innocently, turning to face Laura. She glanced at him, frowning, worried that she may have not have heard him correctly.

"Did you just ask if I and Otto are together? Because we're not. Definitely not. We're just friends." She gabbled quickly.

"Oh really?" Rick said, one eyebrow raised. "Anyone would have thought differently, the way you look at each other."

"Well then they'd be wrong wouldn't they?" Laura shot back.

"Why are you asking me that? I'm not the one in love with my brother."

"I..." Laura stopped still, mouth hanging open. After a second she shut it and looked down at her hands. "You don't know me twenty four hours yet and already you can see what Otto can't."

"I guess I'm just more perceptive than my white haired counter part. Don't worry, I won't tell him. Unless you want me to of course." Rick said with a smile.

"No! Don't!" Laura said quickly. "I'll tell him myself."

"Tell who what?" Otto asked, gingerly dropping from the pipe.

"Tell you about the surprise birthday present Laura was going to get." Rick replied calmly. Opposite him Laura's eyes widened incredulously.

"Nice to see you making friends." Otto said with a smile.

"So what were you doing?" Rick continued, ignoring the evil look the girl was giving him.

"Tracking down H.I.V.E. I think I know where it is. So all we need to do now is borrow a helicopter and fly it there."

"You are joking right?" Rick asked frowning slightly.

"Course he is." Laura said, relieved that he had not pressed for further information regarding their private discussion. But Otto wasn't smiling. He looked serious.

"I can't see any other way to get..." He suddenly cut off, frowning. Then without warning, the boy fell onto his knees and onto his side,

eyes fluttering closed.

The other two sat shocked for a split second, staring at their friend's motionless body. Then Laura gave a cry and it broke them from their spell. Beside her Rick moved into action, starting to rise from his position.

There was a sudden almost inaudible whisper of air and something struck his chest. He collapsed back onto the ground, eyes glazing over even as he saw the little silver dart protruding from his body. He saw Laura spin around and look for the source of the tranquilizer. And then darkness closed in on him and he succumbed to oblivion.

7. Chapter 7

****For all of you who've been waiting patiently, I bring you Chapter 7! Don't forget to review at the end! And if you want you can even leave me an anonymous review if you reckon you could be the next Number One (who's identity is still unknown. Hmm...)****

>
>**ENJOY!****

****Chapter 7****

A hush settled over the atrium. The only sound came from the gentle flow of water that trickled into the pool at one end. Conversations stopped midway and heads turned towards the steel doors. They were slowly sliding shut, the gap between them decreasing by the second.

"Which side do you reckon we should be on big guy?" Shelby said her voice strangely loud in the silence. Her and Wing were sat in their usual area of the accommodation block, resting after a gruelling exercise in the gym.

"I don't think that it would be wise to go outside. Those doors will be protecting us from whatever it is that set off the alarm." He replied, frowning at their rapidly closing exit. Shelby opened her mouth to reply but Wing put up a hand to stop her. She rolled her eyes at him with a faint smile.

"However. Staying in here does not seem like a good idea either. As the saying goes, we'd be easy pickings."

"So what shall it be?" Shelby asked. "Inside or outside. Time is of the essence you know." By now the rest of the students had begun to talk again, their words jumbling into one another. But still no - one seemed to be making a move towards the door and the steadily receding gap to certain freedom.

"We could always use the ventilation shafts if we change our minds, I guess." Wing mused, staring off into the distance. Shelby visibly paled.

"Forget the shafts. I'm out of here." She said standing up. "You coming?" Wing shook his head and the girl turned away.

"Now why would I give up the opportunity to thwart the enemy's plans. That's what we're good at after all. And besides, we still need to find out where Otto and Laura got to." He said, smiling.

"Right then. Can we hurry it up? Those doors won't wait forever you know. And well... last one there's a rotten ninja!" She shouted, sprinting for the hallway outside. Wing launched himself from the couch in hot pursuit and both of them slipped unnoticed through the doors, mere moments before they closed with a hiss. Or at least as unnoticed as they could have hoped for.

"What do you think that they are being up to?" Franz asked Nigel, dabbing at the scratches on his face and arms. His encounter with Ms. Leon had resulted in her claws raking the skin off of his body. Suffice to say, he would never be trying to help a cat in need ever again.

"I really don't want to know." Nigel replied, looking back down at his book. He didn't care that the doors had closed. After all, this was probably the safest place to be in if the school was being attacked, he reassured himself.

"Maybe we should have gone with them." Franz pushed. "I do not want to be in here if there's another killer plant on the loose."

"Don't worry. I've been extra careful. None of my plants _should _turn out like Violet." Nigel said a little uncertainly.

"I hope you are being right. But it is nearly time for dinner and now the doors are closed. And there is being no food in here!" Franz complained, slumping still further in the couch.

"What about your secret supply?" Nigel asked, watching as students began to file towards their 'cells'.

"Of course! I shall go to my room at once. Do not be telling anyone else, or they may want to have some as well and I do not be having enough for everyone." Franz said, whispering. He pushed his plump frame off of the seat and danced on light toes towards the stairs.

Nigel shook his head and returned once again to his book. But a buzzing sound pierced his concentration. He looked towards the doors and found that a rectangle two metres high and one metre wide were being cut down the middle. So much for this being the safest place to be.

* * *

><p>"Which way?" Shelby asked, glancing first left then right.<p>

"Right. The hangar is left and we don't want to run into those who wish us any harm." Wing replied, walking down the aforementioned corridor. The girl shook her head and followed after him, the hallway seeming oddly deserted.

"So where do you think Otto and Laura got off to then?" Shelby asked, a sly note to her voice.

"I don't know." Wing said, frowning. He reached into his pocket and pulled out his blackbox, flipping it open. "H.I.V.E. mind?" There was no response.

"Maybe the school really is being attacked. First Otto and Laura disappear and then there's a lockdown. And now H.I.V.E. mind won't answer our calls." Just then a volley of gunshots could be heard coming from back the way that they had just walked.

The two looked at each other, eyes wide. Screams had begun to accompany the rapid shots of fire.

"Vents?" Shelby asked. Wing nodded. Together they set off in a sprint, looking for an opening to hide in.

* * *

><p>Otto was slowly drawn to consciousness, the way a moth is drawn to light. First came the sounds. People talking. But the words didn't make any sense to his befuddled brain. Then came feeling. There was a pounding in his head and his limbs felt heavy.<p>

He blinked open his eyes and was immediately forced to shut them against the glare of light that flooded through. Then after a few seconds and more cautiously, he tried again.

The first thing he saw was some sort of carving or seal with a falcon or bird of some sort in the middle with writing surrounding it. As his eyes adjusted, the words came into focus.

SEAL OF THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES.

Otto's eyes widened. He was looking at the Presidential Seal, carved into the ceiling of the Oval Office. He glanced down at himself and realised that he was lying on a sofa, completely unharmed. The last thing he remembered was falling to the ground, mid - sentence.

"You could have told me that you were friends with the President of the United States." The voice came to the left and Otto jerked around searching for the speaker. Sitting on the opposite couch were Rick and Laura, the former drinking tea and munching on a biscuit.

Otto opened his mouth to speak but no sound came out so he shut it again, frowning and pushed himself into a sitting position. For a moment the room spun and he was forced to close his eyes and focus on his breathing.

"You should really have something to eat or drink you know. It helps." Rick said, cheerfully. "There's tea or coffee or hot chocolate and biscuits. I didn't know American biscuits could taste so good."

"That's because they're the same as the ones in the UK. We get our food from the same manufacturers, idiot." Laura cut in. "How are you feeling?" She continued, turning to Otto.

"Sick." The boy replied, swivelling so that his feet were firmly on the ground. Then he glanced around the room again and realised that they were alone.

"Where is everyone?" Otto asked, picking up a chocolate digestive and biting into it.

"No idea." Rick said, shrugging. He dunked his biscuit into his cup and it promptly broke in half, the lower end dropping into the tea with a small _splash_.

"We woke up not long before you. Rick here's been eating none stop since he regained consciousness." Laura said helpfully.

"Hey. You don't pass up an opportunity for free food." Rick explained, slurping noisily from his cup. Otto watched him gulp the whole drink down without a pause for breath.

"Any idea what happened?" Laura asked, as the boy to her right finished and sat back with a contented smile.

"No." Otto said, shaking his head. "What about you?"

"I'd hardly be asking you if I knew myself, now would I." She said a little irritated. "Sorry. It's just the effect of the sedative they gave us. Whoever _they _are."

Just then the door opposite the great mahogany desk was pushed open and in strode a man that was as well recognised as his title. He was dressed in a smart black suit, his hair cut short and behind him came the legendary Secret Service, black shades and all.

"You may wait outside." The man said his voice smooth and powerful.

"But..." One of the guards began to say.

"But nothing. These children are harmless. I do not need you here." And with that the man gave a little wave to emphasise that they had been dismissed. The Secret Service nodded as one and departed, the final person to leave, closing the carved doors behind him.

"Ah. Mr Malpense I presume. You have been a difficult person to find. Needless to say though that you already know who I am." The man said to Otto, a smile playing across his lips.

"Yes. You're the President of the United States. The very same President I saved and asked a favour of not long ago. What do you want?" The boy said.

"I want to know why the reports said that you were dead when clearly you're not." The President replied. "And of course what you were doing yesterday, where you've been all this time, why a bomb went off while you were in the premises of a police station, who this is, why he tried to blow up Parliament, and why he looks like you?" The man finished, pointing at Rick.

"You know you didn't have to sedate us to get this information. We would have come gladly." Otto said, taking another biscuit.

"We would?" Rick asked, confused. "I thought we had to get back to..." Suddenly Laura slapped her hand across his mouth, cutting him off.

"Get back to where?" The President asked, intrigued.

"The Orphanage of course. Where Rick and I grew up. You see Rick's my twin brother and well he's been wrongly accused of what you said. What was it again? Trying to blow up Parliament? No he didn't do it. He was just in the wrong place at the wrong time. As were we when that bomb went off." The boy said, munching on the biscuit.

"Oh really." The man said, suspiciously.

"Yes. I'm hurt that you don't believe me. I did after all save your life. And that's a debt that cannot be repaid." Otto said matter of factly.

"So why were you reported dead then?" The man asked, ignoring the boy.

"None of your business. That sort of stuff is way above your level of security." Otto said with a grim smile. The boy raised an eyebrow as he glanced across at his friends and saw that Laura still had her hand over Rick's mouth.

"I am the President of the United States. Are you saying that I lack the authority to possess knowledge of where you've been and why you should be dead?" The man said, his voice rising slightly.

"Quite frankly yes. Now can we stop all this chit chat and get down to business? You sedated us and went out of your way to have us kidnapped. Do you want us to sue?" Otto asked, leaning forward and putting his elbows on his knees.

"And how is a dead man meant to sue?" The President shot back.

"I haven't been reported dead. And neither has Rick." Laura said hotly, finally removing her hand. The boy she'd been silencing quickly took in a deep breath and reached for some water.

"Of course not." The man said with a smile a vulture would be proud of. "But you are both wanted for arrest, are you not? Who would believe a pair of criminals speaking against the President?"

"You have security cameras in here don't you?" Otto asked, as if the thought had just occurred to him. The room suddenly darkened, clouds passing before the sun.

"Yes. Why? Because it would be foolish to attack me if that's what you're thinking." The President said, hands in pockets.

"That's not what I was thinking at all." Otto replied, shaking his head. "But there is now a copy of this conversation ready to be distributed on the internet. The very same conversation where you threaten three teenagers after doing nothing to deny that you had in fact kidnapped them first. A video like that could ruin a man, wouldn't you say Mr President?"

The man visibly paled. "How? You're lying. You must be."

"I can assure you that what I speak is the truth. And it will go live unless you're willing to help us." Otto said calmly.

The President frowned and glanced at the two other teenagers in the room. They sat in silence, expectantly awaiting his decision.

"You really think that I'm going to believe you?" He sneered, eyes narrowing.

"Do you want to chance that?" Otto countered seemingly unfazed.

"Maybe I'll just call in the Secret Service and let them deal with you." The man said, his voice like venom.

"Well then. The video will still go live. You may be able to silence us, but you won't be able to silence your people and the rumours that will circulate." Otto said, never dropping eye contact with the man.

"You know I can make your life just as difficult as you plan to make mine, Mr Malpense." The President said, moving closer to the boy.

Otto smiled and shook his head. Then after a pause, he stood up and faced the man. "And how exactly, Mr President, do you plan to make the life of a _dead _man difficult?"

A mixture of emotions flashed across the politician's face. Calculation. Dawning. Rage. And finally defeat.

The man sighed. "You are a cunning little fox." He said at last. "What do you want and I'll see that it is arranged."

8. Chapter 8

****Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! To everyone who read and reviewed. Not forgetting my anonymous reviewer Jenny! Who could very well be the next number one. Don't forget to do the same with this chapter people! :D****

****ENJOY!****

****(And if you like reading my fics why not check out BET YOU CAN'T KEEP AWAY, a collections of one - shot from yours truly ;)****

****Chapter 8****

The man was at once awake and fully alert, his eyes snapping open in the dim light. He was surrounded on three sides by cool black rock. The third was sealed by thick steel bars.

Nero was in the Detention Centre. Jerking up from the concrete bed, he swung his legs around and stood up. The last thing he remembered was telling H.I.V.E. mind to put the school into an immediate lockdown. He only hoped that that had been the case.

The man shook his head. That shroud should have been shot down the moment communication had been lost. But he had been naive and hoped that the students would be aboard. It was becoming more and more likely that they had perished in that bomb.

Who was going to get them out of this situation now?

"Hello?" Nero called, half - heartedly.

"Max?" A voice piped up from further down the hallway. Nero immediately moved towards the bars and tried to peer to his left. Sure enough, he could see the Professor's spindly fingers poking out from between a pair of bars just like his own.

"Do you know what's going on?" Nero asked. He glanced up and realised that the usual strip lighting wasn't on. The hallway and cells were illuminated by the emergency lighting instead.

"Yes. H.I.V.E.'s been attacked!" Professor Pike said.

"I know that much." Nero said, gritting his teeth. "I need to know what's happened since. Do you know who they are and why they attacked us?"

"Let's see. No! We didn't exactly have a little chat now did we? They came marching into the laboratory and smashed up all the equipment. Then they had the nerve to stick me in here. And as far as I know, they've got the students as well. The lockdown you enforced was merely a minor inconvenience to them." The old man said, exasperated.

Nero took a deep breath, calming himself. "I'm sorry if I snapped. Is there anyone else here?" He asked, his last remaining vestiges of hope, dwindling away.

"Francisco is but he's sedated. So is Tabitha. The rest... Well I just don't know. But Max?"

"Yeah?" Nero said, wearily sitting back down on the low bed and rubbing at his eyes.

"They may not have told me about who they were or why they were here but I do have a theory."

"And?" Nero asked, frowning.

"I think that they may be here to extract H.I.V.E. mind's seed core. It's in some ways similar to the one used to develop Overlord's structure. If the right scientists got their hands on that, then it wouldn't be impossible for them to recreate Overlord."

The blood drained from Nero's face. "Then we have to make sure that they don't get access to H.I.V.E. mind's central processing unit."

"I think it may be too late for that." Professor Pike said quietly. "The emergency lights have switched on. Which means that H.I.V.E. mind is no longer controlling H.I.V.E.'s systems. He's been cut off." He paused and Nero strained to hear what he said next.

"They must already be dismantling him as we speak."

* * *

><p>Otto sank back into the plush leather chair, sighing in content. This was the life. Feet up, a TV before you, grapes at your side...<p>

And a 15,000 foot drop between you and the sea below.

"How long until we get there?" Rick asked, gripping his seat tightly as the plane they were in shook. Otto had demanded that the President let them borrow the aircraft so that they could make their way back to H.I.V.E. He'd also said that he didn't want them to be followed and that they were to be given access to some weapons; mainly low key firearms such as pistols.

"Why? Not scared are we, big brother?" Otto said, a big grin plastered across his face.

"Stop it." Rick hissed, gritting his teeth. "You'd think that the pilot would be a bit more experienced at flying this thing by now." He continued as the plane suddenly jerked down. Otto and Laura looked at each other and burst out laughing, clutching at their stomachs.

"What's so funny?" Rick asked, frowning, his face white.

"Oh nothing." Otto said, pretending to wipe away a tear. "Only that you actually believe there's a pilot on board."

"What?" Rick asked, confused.

"Honestly." Laura said, shaking her head. "You know everything about Otto already from the files. Surely it mentioned something about his abilities."

"Abilities?" Rick gulped, eyes wide.

"Yeah. I can interface with anything electrical. Even say, let's see, the controls of a Presidential jet plane." Otto said, smiling.

"You can do what?" Rick asked, momentarily forgetting his fear and the drop beneath them.

"Come on. Are you telling me that you seriously didn't know about Otto?" Laura asked, frowning.

"No." The boy replied, shaking his head. He became even more tensed, his grip on the chair tightening.

"You'll be fine." Otto said, reaching out and patting his brother on the arm. Then for effect, he stood up into the middle of the walkway, a smile on his face and his voice reassuring.

"See? Nothing will happen to you as long as you're flying with H.I.V.E. airlines." The boy said. Laura began laughing and even Rick cracked a smile.

"Now, do you need more proof of..." Otto trailed off, the grin on his face sliding away. He frowned, his eyes looking at something that wasn't there. The other two passengers glanced at each other, an unspoken fear passing between them.

"Otto?" Rick asked, his breathing becoming shallow. "What's wrong?"

The boy didn't respond. He just stood there, staring into the distance. You wouldn't even know he was alive except for the fact that his chest was rising and falling gently.

"Is this normal?" Rick asked Laura. She shook her head at him then realised he was watching Otto.

"No." The girl said. With a mounting sense of unease she slowly stood out of her seat and approached the boy.

Positioning herself before Otto, Laura glanced back at Rick. He shrugged at her and she turned to face the boy in front of her, shaking her hand before his face. He didn't register that she was there. Then gulping, the girl drew her hand back to slap him.

She didn't get the chance. At that precise moment, the plane dipped down into a steep dive and Laura stumbled forwards onto Otto who snapped out of his trance and caught her in his arms. They fell to the floor, rolling towards the cockpit. Behind them, Rick was almost sick as he felt his stomach drop through the floor.

Otto crashed into the control room door, Laura landing on top of him with a sickening thud. There was a sharp crack and the boy screamed out in pain. Then with another lurch the plane righted itself.

"Otto?" Rick shouted. He undid the belt at his waist, his fingers fumbling. Then despite his fear, the shaking of the aircraft and the flickering of the lights, he ran over to where the other two were moaning.

Laura slowly picked herself up onto her hands and knees, glancing at the boy beside her. He was gritting his teeth and nursing his arm where a bone seemed to be protruding, blood running down the limb. Rick, who'd come up behind her, became pale.

"What was that for?" He shouted eyes wide. "I thought you had control of the bloody plane!"

"I do!" Otto shouted back, pushing himself into a sitting position and wincing.

"Then why the heck did you space out and the plane fall and..." Rick petered out, breathing heavily. Otto was staring into the distance again.

"Great. Laura are you alright?" He asked. She nodded.

Suddenly Otto's head snapped up. "Run." He whispered.

"What?" Laura asked, frowning.

"RUN!" The boy screamed. Rick didn't need to be told twice. He spun around and sprinted for the escape hatch, limping slightly. Behind him, Otto staggered to his feet with Laura's help and they both followed after him.

"Now what?" Rick asked, panicking as they reached the end of the plane.

"Pull the latch and jump!" Otto shouted, pushing a bag into the trembling boy's hands. Then ignoring his limp arm, he gripped onto the lever and pulled. The door released with a hiss and swung open, the wind tugging at their clothes.

"Sorry." Otto said to Rick. The other boy frowned as Otto put a hand on his back and pushed. Rick tripped out into the void and was gone instantly.

"Our turn." Otto said grinning at Laura. Then he gripped her arm and she closed her eyes as they stepped out into the air together.

* * *

><p>The missile traced through the clouds on its pre - ordained trajectory. The wind whistled as it passed and the rocket engines roared. Then with a crunch it met its target.<p>

There was a moment of silence and then the front of the plane was engulfed in flames, a boom reverberating through the air. The sky was filled with a billowing grey cloud of ash and the aircraft tilted towards the sea below. Another rocket crashed into its right wing and with a tearing of metal it fell away.

Faster and faster the jet fell, picking up speed. It began spinning in the air, twisting and turning. Debris rained down before it and with a splash the plane crashed into the water.

For a second it bobbed, the flames extinguished and then, like the Titanic, the aircraft sank below the waves.

All that remained of the carnage was a few floating sheets of metal.

And a yellow dinghy.

* * *

><p>Nigel paced back and forth between the two beds. All of the students had been confined to their rooms, after the attackers had entered the accommodation block, weapons trained on the fleeing pupils. There had been some gunfire and those unlucky few had been cut down mercilessly by the men. Then the students had then been rounded up like cattle and counted before being locked in their rooms.<p>

"What are we going to be doing?" Franz asked, munching on a chocolate bar of German origin.

"I don't know." Nigel replied, sitting down heavily on his bed. "Shelby, Wing, Otto and Laura are loose in the school somewhere, probably off to save the day. Again. And we're stuck in our bedroom, like criminals in prison."

"But isn't the main point of our education being that we become villains?" Franz asked. "And that is being funny, ja?"

"I think you mean that it's ironic, definitely not funny considering our situation." Nigel replied. He sighed and put his head in his hands.

"Maybe we could be scrambling their communications or something." Franz said, helpfully, tucking into a packet of crisp.

"And how would we do that? I don't even know how to hack into an ordinary computer, never mind the H.I.V.E. database." The boy said, exasperated.

"I know. We could be making a distraction. And then while the guards are busy, one of us could be running to get help." Franz said, eyes bright.

Nigel shook his head. "Where would we find help? Nero could be anywhere and..."

"And what?" Franz asked, suddenly afraid.

"Franz. I need you to do something. I need you to pretend to be sick." Nigel said, leaning forward.

"Why?" The boy asked in a small voice, shrinking slightly.

"Because I need to get to the Hydroponics Facility, so that I can check on my latest creation. Violet mark Two." Nigel said with a manic grin.

"I do not think that I am needing to pretend to be sick." Franz replied, clutching at his stomach

9. Chapter 9

I know that this can be very repetitive but I really mean it. THANK YOU for the reviews! Now why not read Chapter 9 to find out what happens next? :D Don't forget to review!**

>**

>**ENJOY!**

Chapter 9

The shock of the cold water as Otto hit it, caused him to gasp out, his breath bursting from his lips in little bubbles. His eyes snapped open and he watched in a daze as the hull of the jet plane slowly sank towards the seabed below. A tug on his right arm drew his attention from the scene not far from them. Laura was trying to swim to the surface and he was dragging her down.

The boy jerked his legs as he began to feel the strain of his lungs. With his free arm he struck out for the surface. A stab of pain shot down the limb as he realised that it was the arm he had broken, the salt from the water around him, stinging the wound and forcing him to grit his teeth. Blood flowed from the gash, staining the blue water red.

As his head broke the surface of the sea, he took in a big gulp of air and coughed explosively, trying to clear his lungs. Beside him, Laura was doing the same, her hair plastered to her face. She

controlled herself and still gripping onto Otto, began spinning around, searching for land or somewhere that they could rest.

"I HATE YOU!" Rick screamed, as he swum over to them. "You bloody pushed me out of the plane!" He said, stopping a metre from them, eyes like daggers.

"Have you seen what nearly happened to us?" Laura shouted back at him. "Otto just saved our lives, you ungrateful trout!"

Rick frowned and glanced up at the trail of black smoke that led down to the sea. It took a moment for him to realise what had happened.

"Someone shot at us?" He said incredulously, eyes wide. There wasn't time for an answer. Otto's head had dipped below the surface and the two of them struggled to keep him afloat.

"I can't swim with my arm!" He gasped, grimacing.

"Well you're not the only one having difficulties. Remember the bullet's I took for you? The whole bandage is soaked through. And now it's stinging." Rick complained.

"Stop your whinging." Laura said, her teeth chattering. "Ever heard of hypothermia? No I didn't think so. Well we need to get to land or find a boat or something. Otherwise we are going to freeze to death."

"Actually I have heard of hypothermia. I'm not stupid. And if you're looking for a boat, maybe you'd notice that there's one over there, if you would just take a second to stop telling me off like I'm some sort of child." Rick shot back. He had Otto's arm over his shoulder and the boy was glaring at him. "And who's side are you on anyway?"

His brother shrugged and looked over to where Rick had motioned. Sure enough there was a yellow dinghy coming their way. Laura opened her mouth in outrage but Otto clamped his free hand over her lips to stop her.

"Have you still got the bag?" He asked Rick faintly. His loss of blood and the pain he was in were starting to take their toll.

"Yeah. Why?" The boy asked, as the boat approached.

"It's got out only weapons in it that's why." Otto replied.

"Should we get them out?" Laura asked, pulling aside the restraining hand.

The boy smiled. "No. Why would we want to kill Raven?"

He looked up and the others did the same. Kneeling in the little yellow dinghy was their all time favourite assassin. She was propelling the boat along with a paddle and as she approached, the woman took it out of the water.

"Now Otto. Why would you be out in the middle of the ocean, having

just jumped from a presidential jet plane that was blown out of the sky?" Raven asked a smile on her face.

"I felt like a swim." He replied. "By the way I don't think you and Richard are acquainted with each other yet. This is my big brother, or twin brother or clone brother. Your choice what you call him, though he prefers Rick."

The smile on Raven's face dropped. "There's two of you?" She sighed. "Just what we needed. Another Otto running around H.I.V.E. causing trouble. Come on. Get into the boat then. Before the sharks get you."

Laura grasped the offered hand and pulled herself up into the dinghy. They then together pulled Otto and Rick out of the water, both of whom collapsed on their fronts breathing heavily.

Raven immediately noticed Otto's broken arm as he pushed himself up against the side of the boat. She knelt down and gripped it, causing him to gasp out in pain.

"Watch it!" He cried. The woman ignored him, shoving the handle of the paddle in his mouth. Then she applied pressure on the bone that was protruding from the arm and he screamed through the wood, eyes shut tight. There was another snap and the bone disappeared beneath the skin.

Raven then clicked open a first aid kit and took out a roll of bandage. She began wrapping it around his arm, despite his attempt to pull it away and finished by pulling the cloth tight. The boy gasped, the paddle dropping from between his teeth and she caught it, turning around and placing it in the water. Then with short fast strokes she began to propel the dinghy along in the water.

"You could have been a little more gentle." Otto said, through gritted teeth.

"I don't do gentle. You should know that already. Now are you going to explain? How did you leave H.I.V.E.? How did you end up out here? How...?" Raven asked, not looking at any of them.

"I get it. I get it." Otto said, interrupting her. "Well it goes like this..." And he continued to explain how they had ended up in the middle of the ocean, a jet plane sinking beside them.

"How did you find out the location of H.I.V.E.?" Raven asked after he'd finished.

"Yeah how did you?" Laura said, looking at the boy, with a frown.

"Remember the docking yard? I used the computer in the warehouse office to trace our path to London using the direction that we were facing when we landed in the shroud and the speed with which we flew there. And using google maps I managed to find an island that was apparently active straight in our flight path. I figured it must have been H.I.V.E." Otto said with a smile.

"That's clever." Rick said, punching him in the arm. The boy winced and scowled at him. "Sorry."

"What I want to know now is who shot us down?" Laura said, turning back to Raven. The wind had picked up and she was shivering.

"Those missiles came from H.I.V.E. And you weren't the only one's shot down. I was flying back in a shroud when I lost communication with the school. Then three rockets just came out of nowhere."

"We are so lucky you were shot down. Not that it's a good thing but well if you hadn't been we'd still be in the water, probably drowning or... I should shut up shouldn't I?" Rick mumbled. Everyone nodded.

"What's that?" Otto asked, looking at the horizon. Before them, rising from the water was a volcano surrounded by plush green trees.

"That's H.I.V.E." Raven replied, quickening her pace.

"H.I.V.E.? Aren't the people who just tried to kill us there?" Rick asked, sitting up.

"Yeah. Which means that it's our job to stop them and retake H.I.V.E." The assassin replied.

Otto shook his head. "And how are we going to do that?"

"You tell me." Raven said. "After all, you're the one who comes up with the suicidal plans."

* * *

><p>The two guards had been stood at the external door for several hours now with no breaks - and no protection against the cold. For warmth they'd tried to talk but that had failed. Neither felt in the mood for chit chat. Besides they had a job to do.<p>

Both men were equipped with machine guns, strong enough to chew up the bark of a tree, fifteen metres away. They had them slung over their shoulders not in the least bit worried that they should be attacked.

The guard on the left began whistling to himself. It was a merry little tune that somewhat annoyed his partner.

"Can you stop doing that?" The man asked roughly.

"No. You know why? Because I have nothing better to do." He replied, whistling once more.

"Yeah well you're not the only..."

Suddenly a shuriken flew through the air lodging itself in the man's chest. He looked down startled, his eyes wide and then toppled over onto his front.

"What the...?" A second shuriken appeared from the trees and the man who'd previously been whistling, ducked to the side as it hit the wall behind him. He slung his gun and in one fluid move trained it in the direction he hoped the projectiles had come from.

"Hands up and walk out slowly or heaven help me I will shoot!" He shouted. There was no response.

The man, breathing heavily, began walking forward, peering into the thick canopy. Sweat trickled down his face, and he gulped, heart racing. Then with his free hand, he pulled a canister from the tactical belt at his waist.

He didn't get the chance to pull the pin.

There was a snap to his right and the guard spun around, gun rising. There was a swish to his left and his eyes widened. There was a thud below and he fell to the ground dead.

"Did you really have to decapitate him?" Rick asked, clutching at his stomach as they trudged out of the trees.

"What would you have had me do? Tie him up so that he could escape? It's much simpler this way." Raven replied, wiping her katana on the grass.

Laura grimaced and walked over to the dead man's head using her fingers to close his unblinking eyes. "There. That's better."

"How's that any better?" Rick cried. "He's still dead!"

"Hey. Calm down would you? Think about it this way. It was either him or us. Did you want to die?" Otto asked.

"Course not. Still..." Rick said, crossing his legs and sitting down heavily. "Now what?"

"You put their clothes on." Raven said, indifferently, collecting her shurikens. She placed her foot on the first guard's chest and ripped the weapon free, with a squelch.

"What!" Rick and Otto cried simultaneously, eyes wide.

"Put their clothes on. You're about the same size as them. And besides, once we enter H.I.V.E. you're going to need a disguise. Especially you Otto. Your white hair stands out too much." Raven explained.

"You want us to put on the clothes of the men you just killed?" Rick asked, horrified.

"Yes." Raven replied, voice firm. Her tone implied that she didn't want to be argued with.

The two boys looked at each other.

"You can have the headless man's clothes." Otto said with a grin. "Should fit perfectly, seeing as though you have no brain anyway." His brother glared at him.

"Hurry up." The assassin said, impatient to get moving.

Laura stood to one side leaning against a tree as Otto and Rick began pulling off the black t-shirts, combats and boots that the two

guards were wearing. She smiled at the looks that passed over their faces and wondered what was going to happen next. Would any of them survive?

"Turn around." Otto said, glancing at her and Raven. He'd taken his jacket off and was waiting for her to look the other way.

"Not embarrassed are we Malpense?" Raven said a faint smile on her face.

"No! I just want a bit of privacy that's all. Rick does to don't you?" Otto asked, turning around. His brother stood behind him already dressed and tucking his brown hair under the cap he wore.

"No I'm fine." Rick replied, with a grin. "Come on hurry up. We don't have time to spare you know."

Otto sighed. "Fine. I'll get changed in there." He said, picking up the clothes and stomping off into the cover of the trees.

"Watch out for the snakes!" Laura shouted, adopting the grin that Rick wore.

The three of them waited for several minutes before Otto walked back out, identical to his brother. You could no longer tell who was who because their hair had been covered by caps. And to make things even harder Otto had smeared what little hair of his that was showing in mud to make it look brown.

"Great." Raven sighed shaking her head. "What's the plan then Otto? Assuming you have one."

"Hey I do have plan. Just one that involves improvising for the majority of our attack." He replied with a grin. "But if that doesn't satisfy you, we could always head for H.I.V.E. mind's central processing unit and try to get him back online.2

"What makes you think that he's offline?" Laura asked, frowning.

"Do you really think that he would have allowed whoever has control of H.I.V.E. to launch missiles at us? No I didn't think so." Otto replied.

"Well then. What are we waiting for? Let's go!" Rick said.

* * *

><p>A helicopter swiftly moved through the air, its propeller's spinning at dizzying speeds. It followed a path hidden in the clouds, seemingly alone. But the drone of engines was far louder than that of one mere aircraft.<p>

Sitting in the cockpit, a man surveyed a laptop screen resting on his lap. He was dressed in a smart white suit, the top button of his shirt undone and some medals pinned to his jacket. His hair swept off of his forehead, smoothly slicked to the side and shining blond in the sunlight.

The man tapped away at the keyboard for a moment and a map popped up,

the helicopter's flight path clearly displayed. He glanced to the lower left of the screen. A countdown there told him how long there was left until they reached their destination.

42 minutes 35 seconds

The man sat back in his chair and watched the clouds swirl outside the window. He'd waited a long time to visit H.I.V.E. He'd travelled farther still. Nothing was going to stop him from getting what he wanted. Overlord would rise again.

41 minutes 50 seconds

41 minutes 49 seconds

41 minutes 48 seconds

"Tick tick goes the clock." The man muttered, smiling to himself.

10. Chapter 10

****We're getting to the climax now! Thank you for all the great reviews. I really appreciate them and can't wait to see what you make of this chapter! :D******

>**

>ENJOY!******

>**

>(Don't forget to review! Pretty please...)****

****Chapter 10****

The group walked down the wide hallway on silent toes. Raven led the way, a pair of manacles binding her wrists behind her back. Laura at her side was also handcuffed. Behind them came Rick and Otto, the former carrying the assassin's katanas and the latter holding a gun.

"How much further?" Rick whispered, looking over his shoulder. "I feel like we're being watched."

"Would you stop being so jumpy? And for your information we are being watched. Ever heard of cameras?" Otto hissed back.

"Yeah well I was only trying to ease the tension."

"Would you two cut it out?" Raven snapped. They'd reached an intersection and running towards them from the right was another guard.

"What are you doing?" He asked, as he came to a stop beside them.

"Found these two trying to turn off the power in the generator room. We're taking them to the Detention Centre." Otto replied crisply, head bowed so that his face was hidden in shadow.

The man frowned. "You do know that the Detention Centre is the other way, don't you?"

"It is?" Rick asked, gulping. "Blimey this school is confusing. We were just following directions. Must've taken a wrong turn somewhere. Any idea which way we should be going?"

"Yeah." The guard replied. "Backwards. Now give those swords to your friend there and come with me."

"What? Me?" Rick asked eyes wide.

"No the invisible man standing to your left." The man replied, sarcastically. "Of course you. I need your help capturing a couple of loose students."

Rick looked at Otto for help, his face pleading. The other boy just shrugged and held out his free hand for the katanas. His brother grudgingly handed them over and turned to follow the guard who had already begun to head down the adjoining corridor. The group watched the two of them disappear around the corner.

"He'll be fine." Raven said, noting the look on Otto's face.

"No he won't. He doesn't know his way around the school. What if they realise he's an imposter? What then?"

"Otto. He's your big brother not the other way around. You shouldn't need to worry about him." Laura said, trying to reassure him.

"Yeah. Only one problem. We've been trained to deal with situations like this. No, scrap that." The boy said shaking his head. "We've been in situations like this before. He hasn't."

"Don't worry. If he's anything like you, he'll be fine." Raven said. "Now I think that we should change course. Our direction will have raised suspicions. Let's head for the Detention Centre and see if we can't free anyone held captive."

* * *

><p>Rick jogged on behind the guard, his breathing shallow and his mind racing. What was he going to do now? He'd been separated from the only people he could trust and he didn't even know how to get back to them.<p>

"Do we know which students we're looking for?" He asked the man, hoping to find out as much as he could.

"How the heck do you expect me to know that? I don't work here." The guard snapped back at him. He slowed into a walk and Rick followed suit, pulling the cap on his head lower over his eyes.

There was a sudden crash from above and the man drew his gun, aiming at the loose grate in the ceiling of the hallway. He peered into the narrow space above, pulling a torch from his belt and flicking it to Rick.

"Switch it on." He instructed. The boy did as he was told shining the light up into the vent above. It didn't work; the shadows only darkened.

Rick walked right up to stand beneath the gap, straining to see anything. Then out of the corner of his, he caught a flash of movement.

"Watch out!" The boy shouted. But it was too late. A sharp thwack to the guard's neck sent him dropping to the floor, struggling to breathe. Simultaneously a sudden weight descended upon his shoulders, forcing Rick's knees to crumple and him to fall flat on his face, the torch skittering away across the ground.

"Pass me some rope. You tie him up and I'll tie this one up." A female voice said above him. There was the sound of something being thrown and caught and then Rick felt his hands being roughly pulled behind him. He began to struggle, snapping out of his shock. The boy managed to get one arm free and wildly hit out at the person on top of him.

Rick's elbow careered into his assailant's face and he felt the weight on his back subside as whoever it was staggered away. Then without a seconds thought, he leapt to his feet and charged the attacker who'd tied up the guard and shoved him in a side room. The boy crashed into the person and they both fell, tumbling to the floor.

His opponent immediately kicked out at him, and Rick rolled away across the floor, clutching at his stomach. He glanced back at the person and found that he'd actually attacked a boy no older than himself with long black hair, tied back. For a moment their eyes met. And then the boy began to laugh.

Rick frowned, his muscles tensed in case of another attack. But it never came. Instead the other boy flipped onto his feet and offered his hand.

"What are you doing?" The voice came from a pretty blonde girl who'd appeared from behind the boy. She stopped when she saw Rick on the floor and her eyes widened.

"Otto! Where've you been all this time?" She exclaimed. Rick frowned. They thought that he was his brother.

"Long story." He replied, grasping the offered hand and pulling himself to his feet.

"You look different." The boy said, studying him.

"I do?" Rick asked.

"If Wing says you look different, you look different." The girl said, arms crossed. "Hey I know what it is. Your hair's brown."

"Brown? Oh yeah." Rick said, clasping his hands together. "Disguise. I rubbed mud into my hair to make it look brown. White stands out too much."

"You did a good job of it then." Wing said eyeing his hair. Rick rocked back on his heels feeling uncomfortable. At least the cap hid the length of his hair, otherwise he'd have had to explain why it had grown so long in such a short amount of time.

"Anyway we need to catch up O... Laura and Raven." Rick said, pointing over his shoulder.

"Where were they headed?" The girl asked.

"Erm..." Rick thought back. "To H.I.V.E. mind's central processing unit so that we can get him back online."

"That's not a good idea. It's crawling with guards. We'll get caught. Better if we go to the accommodation blocks and get the rest of the students on our side. Much simpler. And there's less guards." She replied tersely.

"What do you think that we should do?" Rick asked, turning to Wing.

"Shelby's right. Better to help those who are kept prisoner." The boy replied.

"Fine then. Ladies first." Rick said, raising his eyebrows up at the blonde. At least he'd learnt something from his little detour. Wing and Shelby were Otto's friends and they would help him get back to his brother.

* * *

><p>Nero paced across the little cell, frustrated at the helplessness that he was feeling. This was his school and he could do nothing to protect it. On top of that, Professor Pike had decided that he was going to recite the elements of the periodic table and their relative masses over and over again to pass the time.<p>

He stopped his pacing and sat down on the concrete bed, massaging his temples. Then he sighed and stood up again, peering past the bars. The rattling of keys could be heard coming from further down the corridor but he couldn't see anyone.

"Where did you find these?" A gruff voice asked. Nero reckoned that it was probably their guard.

"Hiding in the generator room, trying to turn off the power." A second voice replied. The man frowned. He knew that voice. And he'd assumed that he'd never hear it again.

Suddenly there was a thump as something heavy fell to the floor. Footsteps approached at a fast pace and Nero smiled in relief as he watched Raven, Laura and Otto appear.

"Nice to see that you're still alive Mr Malpense." He said as the boy began unlocking the door.

"Is it? I thought you'd feel cheated. This was your chance to get rid of me." Otto said grinning. "Although I'd appreciate it if next time you told me about my brother before I met him. Leaves me time to practise my shocked face."

Nero shook his head and stepped out of the cell as the door was pulled open. Further along the passageway Professor Pike was being led out of his room, along with Colonel Francisco and Ms Leon.

"What do we do now Max?" Raven asked, her katanas back in their rightful place.

"We need to retake H.I.V.E. Which means stopping whoever these people are from getting to H.I.V.E. mind's seed core and driving them away." Nero replied.

"But we have no men to fight back with." Francisco said angrily. "They killed them all!"

"The students." Otto said quietly. "We use the students. Together they'd be unstoppable. Just think about it." He continued as Nero began to object. "How many students are there? And how many men are there to stop? We'd easily outnumber them."

"Yes but we'd still be putting their lives at risk. Something I'm not willing to do." Nero said, shaking his head. "We'll find another way."

"You do that then." Otto said, walking away.

"Where are you going?" The man asked.

"To H.I.V.E. mind's processing unit. Someone has to get him back online." The boy said over his shoulder.

"Go with him." Nero said, turning to Professor Pike and Raven. They nodded and hurried to catch up with Otto.

"What do we do then?" Laura asked, watching the group leave.

"Why Miss Brand. We're going to get the Communications Centre back under our control."

11. Chapter 11

Thank you to all the reviews I recieved. I absolutely love reading them. :D But enough about that. Here's the next chapter of my fic. Hope you really enjoy it. And don't forget to review at the end. Please...

ENJOY!

Chapter 11

"Help!" Nigel yelled, pounding his fists against the door. "My friend is sick! He needs to see a doctor!" Behind him, Franz was moaning and clutching at his stomach, sweat beading on his forehead. He lay on his bed, the sheets crinkling and creasing as he rolled about on them.

"Please! You've got to help me! I don't know what to do!" Nigel screamed. He threw his whole weight against the door but it didn't much good.

Suddenly the door hissed open and the boy, thrown forward by his momentum, crashed into the guard on the other side. They were both sent tumbling onto the balcony, where the man flipped over the handrail backwards. Nigel grabbed for his legs but was too late. With

a shout the guard fell over the edge.

There was a dull thud from below. Eyes wide behind his glasses, the boy peered down towards the atrium. The man lay motionless, blood pooling around him, legs twisted at an unusual angle and his arm folded under his body. A guard ran down the stairs from one of the other levels and knelt beside him. He checked the man's pulse and swore. His comrade was dead.

Up above Nigel felt sick. He was a murderer. He'd just killed a man. The boy glanced to his left where another guard stood frowning. The man slowly turned and looked at him. Understanding dawned on his face. Raising the muzzle of the gun in his hand, he pointed it directly at Nigel.

The boy whimpered, his breaths becoming ragged. He watched as the guard's finger tightened upon the trigger. Out of the corner of his eye, he saw Franz appear in the doorway of their room, looking confused.

There was the sound of gunfire. Nigel flinched and stopped breathing. He felt numb.

The man swung around and gazed back down into the atrium below. Standing near the entrance to the cavern was what appeared to be a guard, a gun in his raised hand, the tip smoking slightly.

With a gasp, Nigel sucked in a gulp of air. His knees collapsed beneath him and Franz caught the boy before he fell over. He hadn't been shot. He was still alive.

The two of them watched as most of the guard's lifted their guns to fire down at the person below, no longer concerned about them. But the mysterious man fled before they could shoot at him. Simultaneously they ran for the stairs, hot in pursuit. Only one man remained behind to watch over the students.

He stood on the lower level of balconies opposite Nigel and Franz. As the two boys watched, a figure dropped down from under the upper ledge and landed on the man's shoulder's. He fell to the ground with a thud, his head cracking against the floor, knocking him unconscious. The attacker picked up the guard's gun and stepped into the light.

"Wing!" Nigel shouted. Beside him Franz's face broke into an involuntary grin.

"Come down!" The boy called back, face serious. They nodded and climbed to their feet, slowly descending towards the ground floor. Wing met them at the entrance to the accommodation blocks. He'd stripped the gun to its basic components and thrown them in separate directions as he'd walked.

"Are you alright? You've gone pale?" The boy asked. Nigel nodded mutely, gulping.

"He was being nearly killed." Franz said, oblivious to his friend's discomfort. "And he is wanting to bring back violet. You must be persuading him not to. He is going mad with the shock."

Wing frowned. "You were going to do what?" Nigel looked guilty and opened his mouth to reply but just then Shelby ran into the cavern, closely followed by Rick.

"Next time we switch jobs. Bozo here forgot how to get to the maze and we were nearly caught. Had to go full circle and then the idiot decides that he wants to join the guards in the the pit. We've done the exercise so many times before and Otto chooses today to forget where the traps are!" The girl said angrily.

"I got nervous. You can't blame me. Next time you can do the whole shooting into the air thing yourself." Rick shot back.

"Did it work?" Wing asked. They nodded.

"The men are all trapped in the pit, up to their waist's in freezing cold water. They're not going anywhere." Shelby said.

"You look different." Nigel suddenly muttered, squinting at Rick.

"I know. It's the hair. I coloured it brown with some mud." The boy replied, distractedly.

"No. You look different. And it's not the hair." Nigel said, frowning.

"I don't know then. Look. We're done with this block. Can we go to the next one and see if we can't free the students there?"

Shelby nodded. "Yeah. Our work's not done yet. You going to come with us?" She asked Nigel and Franz. They shook their heads.

"I am not wanting to be killed." The german boy said.

"Yeah. But think about it. If you come with us, we can side track to the kitchens." The girl replied, tauntingly.

"What are we waiting for? Let's be going!" Franz said, pushing past them to take the lead. The group set off behind him, grinning. All except Nigel. He followed at the back a frown still on his face.

* * *

><p>Nero held up his hand, stopping Laura, Francisco and Ms Leon in their tracks. They looked at him as he gestured for them to be silent. Then, his head cocked to one side, he strained to hear anything, a frown on his face. They felt themselves leaning forward, drawn in the direction that he was gazing.<p>

The man held his breath. He could hear footsteps. It sounded like a group of people hurrying to get somewhere. They were heading towards them. But the sounds weren't heavy. They were light.

Before Nero could react, Francisco had removed his gun from the holster at his belt and was aiming it down the corridor towards the sounds of footsteps, and switching the safety off. The colonel moved in front of their little group hoping to shield them from what he assumed were hostiles.

The footsteps grew louder and he gently pulled back the trigger. Nero

glanced over to him and opened his mouth to order the man to stand down. But he was too late. As the first person rounded the corner Francisco jerked his finger back.

There was a crack like lightening and Laura flinched. She watched as the bullet left the smoking barrel and flew through the air towards its target; Franz.

The bullet made contact. Simutaneausly, the eyes of those watching widened in shock.

There was the clatter of something falling to the floor and the sound of liquid dripping.

Time seemed to stand still. Everyone stood frozen and silent.

"I am regreting leaving the accommodation block." Franz suddenly said. There was a collective sigh as his friends and teachers all released their breaths at once.

The boy was stood in a puddle of coke, the drink dripping from a punctured bottle in his hand. Lying on the floor by his feet was a can, shredded to pieces.

"Mr Argentblum are you okay?" Nero asked, striding over to the boy and gripping his shoulders.

"I am thinking so. But I did not know that Colonel Francisco was hating me _that _much." Franz replied, voice high.

"No he doesn't. He didn't mean to shoot. Did you?" Nero said, scowling at the other man, who avoided his eye looking sheepishly towards the ground. "Look at me." He continued firmly.

Francisco lifted his head and looked at him but still avoided eye contact.

"I want you to apologise to Mr Argentblum and then escort him back to the his accommodation block where you are to remain. Understood? And give me your gun." Nero ordered, holding out his hand. The colonel handed over the gun reluctantly, gritting his teeth and began walking down the corridor. Before he reached the corner, he glanced back waiting for the boy to follow.

"Go on." Nero said to Franz. The boy took a deep breath, and walked after Francisco his body tense.

"I'll go with him." Nigel said, moving to join his friend. Up until this point Nero had not registered the presence of the other five students. He nodded mutely. Then as he looked at the others, he frowned.

"Otto!" Nero asked, confused. "Weren't you going to H.I.V.E. mind's central processing unit? And where's Raven and the Professor?"

Rick's eyes widened. "I was. Got sidetracked helping Shelby and Wing." He could see Laura standing behind the man, looking at him with an eyebrow raised.

Nigel a little way down the corridor had been listening and he suddenly turned back, walking over to them. Francisco and Franz waited impatiently near the corner for him.

"Nero? Does Otto look different to you? Shelby? Wing? Laura? What about you?" The boy asked.

"No. Why? If it's his hair you're talking about I noticed it before. I'm assuming he coloured it somehow to use as a disguise." Nero answered, arms folded. The other three shrugged.

Nigel looked back at Rick. "I don't know. He looks older."

"Well it doesn't matter." Laura suddenly said. "He needs to get back to H.I.V.E. mind's central processing unit, otherwise we're never going to get H.I.V.E. back. I'll go with him." She grabbed his arm and spun him around, heading down the corridor. But Nigel reached out with quick fingers and plucked Rick's cap from his head. The boy's long hair spilled out onto his shoulders. He stopped in his tracks, pulling the girl short.

"Otto? Why is there a monster on your head?" Shelby asked, eyes wide. Even the shockless Wing beside her looked dumbfounded.

Rick turned around and glared at her. "It's not a monster. It's my hair. And I'm not Otto. My name's Rick." He said, snatching the cap from Nigel's hands and jamming it back on his head. The boy was sure to cover as much of his hair as possible.

"You're the kid from the news coverage." Nero said.

"Who?" The rest said, simultaneously. All except Ms Leon who lounged on the floor looking bored.

Suddenly the sounds of footsteps echoed down the corridor. It seemed that the guards sent to catch them had finally caught up.

"Right that doesn't matter at the moment." Nero said quickly, snapping out of his shock. "I'm sure we'll all hear the story later. Rick? You and Ms Leon go help Otto. Nigel. You and Franz go with the colonel to the accommodation blocks. Laura, Shelby and Wing. You're coming with me." For a second nobody moved. "Now people!"

"Wait! Who's Ms Leon?" Rick asked, as the others dispersed in different directions. There was a tug on his trouser and he looked down.

"I am. Don't say anything. Just follow me." The white cat at his feet said. His eyes widened but he dutifully kept his mouth shut and followed.

12. Chapter 12

I absolutely love reading your reviews and so thank you to all those who did review and managed to put a smile on my face simultaneously. :D Now here's the next chapter, I hope you like it and don't forget to click the little button at the end. :)

ENJOY!

****Chapter 12****

Otto peered cautiously around the corner. Patrolling the corridor outside the door to H.I.V.E. mind's central processing unit were several guards. No. There were more than several. To his eyes, it looked as if there were at least nine, maybe more but he hadn't seen who was inside the actual room itself.

"Raven? Time to work your magic I think." The boy said, turning to the assassin beside him. She gave him a predatory grin and silently slipped her katanas from their sheathes on her back, before slipping around the corner. Otto waited with bated breath and listened as she disposed of the hostiles. There was a thud as each one fell to the floor.

"Coast is clear." Raven called back. The boy turned into the hallway, Professor Pike shuffling along behind him. As they walked towards the reinforced steel door, he was relieved to see that there wasn't any blood on the floor around the felled guards. That meant that the assassin hadn't killed them. At least he liked to think so.

Otto stopped before the black keypad on the wall and closed his eyes. At once he was within the electrical world, bypassing codes and security as easily as if he was pushing aside a curtain. It came naturally to him and within seconds the doors were grinding open. Raven, beside him, stood ready with her blades drawn, glinting in the light.

The boy's eyes snapped open as he heard a sudden whimper from the Professor. The first thing he saw were the man's boots; steel - capped, size thirteen and covered in dried mud. Then as his eyes travelled upwards the rest of the guard came into focus.

He was a giant of a man. Beefy legs. Thick arms. Muscled torso. The guard stood over six feet tall, his bald head, pitted with deep scars. Half of one ear was missing and as he gave them a viscious smile, they could see that he was missing several teeth.

"Now what do we have here?" The man growled, taking a step forward.

"Let us through. I was given orders to bring the scientist to help extract the seed core from the artificial intelligence's processing unit." Otto said, firmly, clenching his fists so that they didn't shake.

"Oh really? And why then, is your little friend directing her sharp sticks at me?" He continued, taking another step forward.

The change was immediate. Raven's expression darkened and the crackle of purple energy around her katanas became more frenzied as she switched the sharpness up to its highest setting.

"Say that one more time." She hissed between her teeth, her eyes like daggers. By this point, Otto and the Professor had backed up against the opposite wall, faces white with fear.

"You're going to..." The guard never finished. With one quick movement, the blades sliced through his neck, severing his head from

his body. Blood fountained into the air and then fell in little ruby droplets. He dropped to his knees and slumped to the floor dead.

Otto flinched as the man's decapitated head came to a stop by his feet. The eyes were still open and faintly surprised. Already it had taken on a grey hue.

"I think I'm going to be sick." Otto whispered, clutching at his middle. He stumbled away from the corpse, and fell onto all fours, his body heaving as it tried to upend the contents of his stomach.

"Are you alright?" Raven asked, nonplussed. She was wiping her weapons on the clothes of the giant that she'd just killed.

"Was that really necessary?" He snapped back, rising shakily to his feet. Professor Pike ignored them and cautiously stuck his head around the door to H.I.V.E. mind's central processing unit.

"Yes." The assassin replied. "He insulted both me and my katanas. Besides, he was going to kill us. Do you want to die Mr Malpense? Because I could easily arrange that for you."

He shook his head and shut his eyes for a moment. The metallic smell of blood was making him feel dizzy.

Suddenly there was the sound of shooting and the swish of blades. Screams rang through the air only to be snuffed out like a candle flame. Otto tentatively opened his eyes and walked, reluctantly into the cavern beyond the doors. The scene that met him wasn't much different from the one outside. Bodies were strewn across the floor, most of them in lab coats, but here and there lay some guards.

"What the..." The boy muttered under his breath, as his eyes alighted on the monoliths. Each one looked as if it had been dissected and streams of wires cascaded from the open devices. Chips and electronic boards dotted the area around them. Before blue lights had danced across the surface of the pedestal in the middle. Now it was dark with only the occasional flicker.

"This may take a while. It looks as if they've pulled out each circuit board separately." Professor Pike said into the silence.

"We don't have time." Raven replied, sheathing her katanas. "A distress signal needs to be sent to the Megladon as soon as possible. We simply don't have the men that they could supply us with. And you haven't seen the number of troops that are patrolling H.I.V.E. Remember this is a very big volcano. You could hide a small army here."

"Let me guess. You need H.I.V.E. mind to send that signal right?" Otto asked, moving over to a control panel.

"Exactly." She said. "Any ideas on how to get H.I.V.E. mind back online before the security in the communications centre realise that we're in here and send guards down to finish us off?"

"Yeah. We bring him back but without all the unnecessary firewalls and what not. That should save some time. And we'll only connect him to

H.I.V.E.'s communications and defences. Instead of all of the school's usual systems." Otto replied, beginning to pick up wires and scan the monoliths. Professor Pike gave him a proud smile and then began helping the boy by bringing up the data that they would need at a nearby terminal.

"I'll just wait outside then." Raven said to herself. The two didn't seem to hear her and she rolled her eyes, heading for the doors. But before she reached them they swung open.

The assassin unsheathed her katanas and swung them around, holding the blades centimetres from the boy's neck. Beside him, a white cat stood transfixed by the light glimmering along the steel weapons.

"Nero sent us to help." Rick quickly gabbled, hands in the air. Ms Leon continued to stare in wonder as a slow purring emanated from her throat.

Raven re-sheathed her katanas and the boy visibly relaxed.

"Otto's over there." She said, nodding towards the monoliths where he stood, a tablet display in hand. The boy walked over to his brother and laid a hand on his shoulder making him jump.

"Rick! So you didn't get killed after all?" Otto said, glancing at him, before looking back at the screen in front of him.

"Yup. I did meet some of your friends though. They thought I was you." He replied, grinning.

"They did what?" Otto said, eyes wide.

"Don't worry. They won't make the same mistake twice. Hopefully." Rick said. "Now is there anything that I can help with?"

"Not really. All of the wires we need are in place. Professor Pike is running some quick diagnostics and I'm wondering how we can get H.I.V.E. mind back online with all this a mess." He replied. "I think I'm going to have to interface with the systems."

"I still don't understand." Rick said, sitting down on the pedestal.

"Get off that!" Otto shouted. His brother jumped off, looking confused.

"It's not a chair you know. H.I.V.E. mind will appear hovering over the pyramid. He needs it to materialise so don't damage it."

Rick held up his hands to show that he'd understood and then lowered them. "Who's the cat?" He whispered, looking over to Ms Leon who was talking to Raven.

"An experiment gone wrong. One of Professor Pike's actually." Otto explained, nodding over to the old man, who was furiously tapping away at a keyboard. "He tried to give her the qualities of a cat but instead switched their bodies around. So she's in the cat and the cat's in her." His brother nodded like he understood.

"We have incoming!" Raven suddenly shouted from across the room. "Footsteps coming our way! I suggest you hurry up!" The woman pushed the doors closed until they clicked into place and stood in front of them, blades drawn. Beside her, Ms Leon scarpered for cover, yowling in fright.

"Professor! I'm going to interface with the system. It's the fastest way to get H.I.V.E. mind back online." Otto said, dropping the tablet display and placing his hands on the pedastal. The old man began to say something but an insistent hammering on the door stopped him.

Rick eyed the monoliths. The blue lights flickering along them had increased slightly and there were sparks crackling along some of the cables.

"Is this safe?" He asked the scientist. The man's eyes widened slightly at him but he said nothing about the similarties between the two boys and shrugged, backing away from the centre of the room.

"Most probably. But H.I.V.E. has participated in far more dangerous experiments before. So this shouldn't be any different. Besides, we have to get H.I.V.E. mind back online this instant. And Otto's our best chance of that." Professor Pike said.

The sparks were getting more frequent now and moving closer to the pedastal. Rick frowned. His brother needed to move now. Tentatively, he reached out his hand and placed it on the boy's shoulder hoping to shake him back to reality.

There was a sudden surge of power, all of it converging in the middle of the monoliths where Otto had his hands. Without any warning it broke free as a wave of electricity and ran through him. He jerked and was thrown backwards. Rick with his hand still on the boy's shoulder felt an inexplicable shock of pain and was sent flying from the force, sliding to a halt a couple of metres away. His head cracked against the floor and darkness claimed him.

* * *

><p>The hangar doors were open and light flooded into the spacious chamber below. Nothing looked any different than normal. Shrouds stood tall and proud in the corners. Equipment waited patiently to the side, waiting to be packed. All except a group of men in black uniform who sat on some crates, waiting for something. Or someone.<p>

A sudden whirring engine sound disturbed the silence hanging in the air. From above a helicopter descended down into the cavern, landing lightly on the floor. The noise cut out and the back door swung open. From its interior several men ran out, scanning the vicinity with weapons in hand. When they realised that the only other people in the hangar with them were their own men, they signalled to the helicopter and their leader stepped down from the exit.

He took a deep breath, inhaling the smell of oil. H.I.V.E. was finally his.

The blond man raised his right hand and clicked his fingers.

There was a sudden shimmering across the cavern and dozens of shrouds appeared, hovering in the air. Guards began to zip down lines to the floor, armed heavily with guns. It was time that things moved on.

"Sir? The Megladon has docked on the opposite side of the island. What should we do?" One of the men asked, walking over to him, a radio in his hand.

"Dispose of them of course. No - one is to live." Alexander replied calmly.

"And according to the guards already here, Nero's escaped." He continued warily.

"Well then. We better get a move on haven't we?" The man said dangerously.

13. Chapter 13

****Thank you to those who reviewed and I really can't wait to see how you react to this chapter. Don't hate me. :D And don't forget to review and let me know what you think!****

****ENJOY!****

****Chapter 13****

"Nero? How do you expect us to get into the communications centre and take control of it when there's about thirty odd guards in there and only four of us? Three of which are sixteen year old students." Shelby asked, leaning back against a desk.

The little group were hiding in one of the classrooms, several corridors away from their target point and were trying to reach an agreement on their attack strategy. Wing was stood to one side, listening carefully but refusing to contribute. He claimed that his skill came in defence not attack, and certainly not in planning. The boy was also still confused about Rick and was trying to reach a conclusion on the impression he had of him. So far it did not look good. Mostly because he'd lied and impersonated Otto. But mainly Wing was disappointed in himself. He hadn't realised that Rick was not his roommate. Which meant that he didn't know his friend as well as he thought he did.

"Hey. What's today's date?" Laura suddenly piped up from her seat beside Shelby. Everyone turned to her, eyebrows raised. "Well come on. What's the date then?"

"It's the twenty - eighth of August." Nero said, arms folded. "Why?"

"Because it's Otto's birthday. I can't believe I forgot. And he turns sixteen as well. We were going to throw a party for him." The girl explained. Wing frowned. How could he have forgotten?

"Considering the circumstances I reckon Otto will be fine without presents and a party until H.I.V.E. is ours once more. If not, he'll

just have to make do for the time being." The teacher replied, looking at her sternly. "Now about our attack."

"Yeah. What are we going to do?" Shelby asked, swinging her legs back and forth.

"Otto and Rick's disguises worked quite well. We'll knock a passing guard unconscious, Wing can dress up as him and then do a bit of acting." Nero said.

"And what exactly do I have to do?" The boy asked, worried.

"I know!" Shelby cried. "Run in there, panting with your clothes torn and act hysterical. Then get them to go to a totally deserted area of the school. You can make something up to persuade them. Like they're under attack."

Suddenly the door swung open and a guard walked in. He paused when he saw them, eyes wide. Then snapping out of his shock, the man reached for the weapon at his belt.

Wing was upon him in a flash, vaulting over a table and grabbing a chair. He brought it crashing over the guard's head, knocking him out cold.

"That was fast. I guess it's time to put our plan into action. Get changed then." Shelby said, grinning mischievously.

Ten minutes later Wing was racing towards the communications centre, the guard's uniform on and sufficiently torn. Black charcoal had been smeared across his face to imitate the soot you get from explosions. Nero had also given him a phone to send a message back to the group, to let them know when the coast was clear.

The boy reached the door to the cavern and crashed through them, collapsing to the floor. He didn't dare look to see how many men he was surrounded by but concentrated on his breathing as if he was trying to slow it down. A pair of boots came into his view and Wing glanced up into the face of a powerful man; the leader of the attack. He wasn't dressed in a suit but wore a guard's uniform. The boy reckoned that he probably answered to a higher calling himself. No way was the brains behind the operation going to come along on the strike.

"What's wrong?" The man barked, frowning. Wing took a couple more deep breaths, trying to think of how to respond. Panic. That's what Shelby had said.

"We're being attacked in the south of the school! They've blown through the defences! There was blood everywhere! There... there..." He petered out looking down at his hands, which had begun to shake of their own accord.

"Attacked from whom?" The guard asked more gently, dropping down onto his haunches. Wing hadn't expected that question and was momentarily stumped. Then he remembered what Franz had told him earlier.

"A giant canivorous plant." He said, taking a deep breath. "That kid. The Darkdoom one. He escaped from the accommodation block and got to the Hydoponics facility. The boy had the creature growing in there."

And he let it loose. It smashed right through the room and grabbed my partner and ate him! Conventional weapons aren't working! You need to send down men with grenades and bombs and flamethrowers! And you need to send them NOW!" Wing shouted.

The man didn't look very convinced as he stood up.

"Do a background check on the Darkdoom kid." He ordered a nearby technician from their attack squad. The woman rapidly began tapping at her keyboard and when she stopped there was an image of Nigel on the screen. They studied the report for a minute and then the man rocked back on his heels, surprise on his face.

"What should we do sir?" Another guard asked.

"Dispatch as many men to the Hydroponics facility. This guard was telling the truth." No - one moved. "Come on! Move it! We have a plant to take care off!"

Suddenly people were rushing about. Men from other parts of the school were radioed and told to get to the Hydroponics facility with any weapons they could get a hold of. Those in the communications centre prepared themselves and left in groups. The leader went with the last of the guards to leave, telling Wing to stay in the cavern. All of it took about five minutes and the boy marvelled at their efficiency. But he didn't take long. Surreptitiously so as to not alert the four remaining enemy personnel, he pulled out the phone and pressed send.

* * *

><p>Back in the classroom, Nero checked his mobile. Sure enough there was the signal from Wing. He gestured to the two girls who'd been lounging on a nearby desk and they were instantly alert.<p>

As one, the group gathered around the door and waited until the sounds of footsteps outside died down. Then Nero eased it open and peered both ways. They left silently, creeping down the corridors. As they reached the entrance to the communications centre, the door was pulled open and stood there was Wing, grinning broadly.

"You did it big guy!" Shelby said smiling.

"You doubted me?" Wing asked, confused.

"No of course we didn't." Laura said, walking past him into the room. She noticed that there were four people slumped over work stations. Ignoring them, the girl made her way over to a free terminal, where she began looking at the security feeds from around the school.

"What did you say to them?" Nero asked the boy.

"I told them that Nigel had released another Violet that was terrorising the school. His files from the first year helped to back up my story. They'll be at the Hydroponics facility right now." Wing replied.

"Guys come and look at this!" Laura called over to them.

The trio walked up to her and studied the screen she was looking at. It was a live video of H.I.V.E. mind's central processing unit. The cavern was in a mess with wires thrown about randomly and bodies strewn across the floor.

In the middle of the room they could see Otto touching the pedestal surrounded by the monoliths. Rick walked over to him and placed his hand on the boy's shoulder. They then watched as a surge of power coursed through the cables and both boys were thrown back. The video feed blanked out, replaced by static.

"What just happened?" Shelby asked, her voice quiet.

"Otto must've tried to interface with H.I.V.E. mind to get him back online. They've been electrocuted. Both him and Rick." Nero explained.

"We need to get them help then." Laura said frantically, rising from her seat.

"No. Raven'll be there to help them. We need to check if they were successful." He continued. "See if you can find H.I.V.E. mind in the system anywhere. Try and call him here."

The girl reluctantly sat back down and began tapping at her keyboard. Almost instantly the large screen on the wall lit up in blue. But there was nothing there.

"Erm..." Shelby said, frowning.

Suddenly words started to appear in white on the screen.

How can I be of assistance Dr Nero?

"H.I.V.E. mind?" Laura asked, uncertainly.

Yes Miss Brand?

"Good to have you back." Nero said with a relieved sigh. "I need you to send a signal to the Megladon. Let them know that we need help and that we've been attacked."

The Megladon was contacted when you ordered me to initiate a school wide lockdown. They should be here by now.

"Laura? Check the cameras in the loading dock." Nero said, turning back to her computer screen. She began to tap away on her keyboard but was halted by a sudden screech. The four of them flinched, hurriedly covering their ears.

"What is that!" Shelby shouted over the sound.

"Wait a second!" Laura screamed back, fiddling with some dials. The harsh sound dimmed a little and then a voice began to form over the constant beep, crackling.

"This is the Megladon. Do you read? Over."

Back on the screen an image of H.I.V.E.'s dock flickered to life and they could clearly see that rising from the ocean was a submarine.

The water cascaded down its smooth sides and a door near the front slid up, a ramp whirring into place beside it. A bald man then walked down onto the pier, men following him and spreading out in all directions.

"Max are you there?" A voice crackled over the comms. Nero reached for the radio and pressed the button.

"You could have come a bit earlier, Diabolus." He said, with a wry smile.

"Of course. But I prefer to be fashionable late and make an appearance. Where should I dispatch my troops?" Darkdoom replied, scanning the cavern on the screen.

"To the Hydroponics facility. That's where most of the attackers will be. Thanks to Wing. Try not to make a mess." Nero said, watching the video feed.

Laura stood up and moved over to the screen on the wall, while the man sat down and began looking through all the live security footages. She watched the three of them concentrate on fighting back against the enemy and half listened to their conversation.

"Do you know if Otto is okay?" The girl asked, turning to the screen with H.I.V.E. mind's dialect on it.

I do not know. He did a very dangerous thing to get me back online and I thank him for that. However I can tell you that there are four people breathing in the room from the oxygen and carbon dioxide levels.

"Four?" Laura said, thinking.

Yes. Do you know who was in that room?

"Raven, Otto, Rick, Professor Pike and Ms Leon." She replied.

That is five. Someone must have left.

"Or someone stopped breathing. Is the corridor outside clear?" Laura asked, hurriedly.

The hallway outside the communications centre is clear and due to defensive measures the passageway outside my processing unit is now also clear.

The girl was no longer reading. She sprinted from the room, pulling open the door and racing down the corridors. Her heart beat frantically in her chest and she could feel a stitch in her side forming. But she didn't slow down.

As Laura rounded the last corner, she saw that the door to the cavern beyond was open and standing in the doorway was a boy wearing a guard's uniform a cap on his head. She sighed in relief.

"Otto!" She shouted running over to him. The boy looked up and she flung her arms around his neck closing her eyes and kissing him before she could think. He seemed to stiffen and she broke away looking at him, folding her arms.

"Happy birthday!" She said a little embarrassed. Then the girl frowned. "What's the matter? Is it Rick? Has something happened to him?"

"Wrong person." He croaked, giving her an apologetic shrug.

Laura's eyes widened and before she knew what she was doing, the girl pulled back her hand and slapped him hard across the face.

14. Chapter 14

****A massive thank you to those who reviewed Chapter 13. Your feedback was great! :D Don't forget to do the same here.
:D****

****ENJOY!****

****Chapter 14****

Nero sat in a chair, attention focused on the action unfolding on the screen in front of him down in the Hydroponics Facility. He had a radio in his hand, ready to convey information to the troops from the Megladon that would help them in their battle against the attacking guards. Behind him, Wing paced back and forth worried about his friends. Shelby on the other hand looked totally relaxed leaning back against a control panel.

"Can you stop doing that please?" She sighed exasperated.

"Sorry. It's just that I hate the fact that Otto's just been electrocuted and I don't know if he's alright." Wing replied, stopping in the middle of the room facing her.

"I know. But he's been through worse. I'm sure he'll be fine." Shelby said, reassuringly. The girl walked over to him and touched his face, with a small smile.

"You don't know that though. He's like my brother. I can't bear to see him hurt. And if he is..." Wing left the sentence unfinished.

Shelby shook her head and leaned in to kiss him, wrapping her arms around his neck. He responded by enclosing her in a hug and lifting her up off of the floor so that they were at the same height.

They pulled apart abruptly as there was a sudden crash from the far side of the room. Nero had toppled from the chair he was sat on in his rush for the exit. Now he ran past them and pushed the doors which Laura had left open shut with a heave. Automatically a steel bar slid across them, preventing the doors from opening again.

"What was that for?" Shelby asked anxiously, dropping to the ground lightly as Wing let her go.

"It seems as if reinforcements have arrived. The person behind the attack on H.I.V.E. is here. And whoever it is has brought lots more men and weapons." Nero replied, striding back to the screen he'd been looking at before and scanning it. Just as he reached the terminal, a

chorus of banging started up against the door. To the students ears it sounded like drumming.

"It's nothing that the soldiers from the Megladon can't handle right?" Shelby said, glancing over the teacher's shoulder. What she saw made her heart lurch. Standing in the corridor outside were twenty, maybe thirty men all firing their guns at the metal surface of the doors.

"They can't get in can they?" Wing asked frowning, his arms folded.

"I don't know. I've told Darkdoom and he's sent men here to help us but I just don't know. And it's not the only problem we have either. Look at this." Nero replied, tapping at the keyboard.

The image on the screen changed to show a map of H.I.V.E., small red dots moving out in all directions from the hanger bay. Many were heading towards a section of blue dots that converged near a small image of a plant. Wing reckoned that it was the Hyrdoponics Facility. But as he watched a cluster of the red dots broke away and headed towards an image of H.I.V.E. mind's face. The room that stored his central processing unit.

"We can't let them get there." Nero was saying.

"Why not?" Shelby asked, confused.

"Because if they get a hold of H.I.V.E. mind's seed core they can bring back Overlord. And that's something we definitely don't want."

"Otto's down there. If they get him and the seed core..." Wing said eyes widening.

A tremendous bang suddenly sounded outside the door and smoke drifted through the gaps between it and the floor.

"Looks like we're running out of time." The man said. Shelby sighed and glanced around. Then she turned back to them, grinning.

"I can't believe that I'm going to say this. But the only way that we're getting out of here is by using the vents again."

* * *

><p>Laura stomped into H.I.V.E. mind's central processing unit, her face flushed a bright pink. She couldn't believe what she'd just done. It wasn't possible. Rick? How could she have mistaken Rick for Otto? It was crazy!<p>

"Who's there?" A voice called from up ahead. The girl sprinted the final distance to the monoliths and skirted around them to the other side where Raven was kneeling over someone. Professor Pike was stood wringing his hands to her right and Ms Leon was perched on the floor to her left.

"Otto? Is he okay?" Laura asked, eyes wide, her breathing becoming ragged. The boy was lying on the floor his head lolling to the side, eyes closed and chest barely moving.

"Calm down!" Raven said trying to reassure her. "He's breathing regularly and at the moment it only seems as if he's unconscious. But he'll have to have scans done."

Laura opened her mouth to speak but Rick got there first. He'd walked in shortly after her and was massaging his cheek where a there was a purple splotch, scowling slightly. He hadn't once looked at her.

"Scans? What for?" He asked.

"Rick! He's just been electrocuted! Do you really think he'll be perfectly fine? I've read that people can get brain damage from this sort of thing. What if he becomes blind? Or loses his speech? Or goes into a coma forever?" Laura said, her voice growing in strength with each breath. The boy opposite finally looked up at her and raised an eyebrow. Everyone was looking at her frowning.

"What? It could happen." She said, dropping to her knees and gazing at Otto's peaceful face.

Raven's blackbox suddenly crackled to life in her pocket. She hurriedly pulled it out and flicked it open. Looking back at her was Nero, his face grim. He seemed to be in a dark and narrow space.

"Where are you?" The assassin asked, puzzled.

"In the vents. I only just fit. And it feels like the damn thing will fall every time I move." He replied, grimacing.

"You're in the vents?" Raven said in disbelief. "What are you doing in there?"

"Shelby persuaded me that it was the only way out of the Communications Centre. It's surrounded. We had to give it up. But everything's been destroyed in there. So they can't use the equipment. By the way. Great job on getting H.I.V.E. mind back online." Nero said with a slight smile.

"Yeah. We have Otto to thank for that. But now he's unconscious." The assassin continued.

"Unconscious? That's not good. You have hostiles heading your way. I have no idea how long it'll take them to get to you. I suggest that you get out of there and hide." Nero said, anxiously.

"Too late." Rick whispered.

* * *

><p>"What happened?" Wing asked from behind the teacher. The trio were crowded in a vent several corridors away from the Communications Centre. Nero was up front taking the lead and Shelby was following at the back. When they'd first climbed into the narrow space, she'd given her boyfriend a wolf whistle and winked at him, causing him to blush.<p>

"Raven cut me off. I think the enemy soldiers are already there." He

replied, biting his lip.

"So now what?" Shelby asked. "You said that they couldn't get H.I.V.E. mind's seed core at all costs. And now it looks as if they're going to get both that and Otto!"

"I know." Nero said, trying to think. "Raven will fight most of them off. But they'll still get what they want. And H.I.V.E. mind will probably get destroyed in the process."

"I may have a suggestion." The A.I.'s voice said, suddenly coming out of his blackbox.

"And that would be?" Wing asked from behind him.

"Remember the giant robots that Cypher used to attack H.I.V.E.? They're still in storage. I could interface with them and attack the guards." H.I.V.E. mind said calmly.

* * *

><p>Raven pulled out her katanas, ready to fight to the death. But what use were swords against thirty or so guns? It would be suicide to fight. And she had to keep the others alive. So it was with a heavy heart that she laid down her weapons and obediently stepped away from them. Almost at once a dozen guards surrounded her, chaining her wrists together and binding her with rope. The rest of the men moved to encircle the three students and two teachers, one of them grabbing Ms Leon by the scruff of her neck. He wore protective gloves to stop the cat scratching him and held her at arms length.<p>

"Sir?" One of the hostiles shouted. It was signal for some unseen person to step into the room.

From the corridor outside a man entered, wearing a white suit, his blond hair slicked back. He looked around at the six of them, his eyes resting slightly longer on Otto and Rick, both of whom were still wearing their caps to cover their hair. His face flickered smoothly into a smile.

"Otto? Or is it Rick?" He asked in a calming voice, gazing at the latter.

"Otto." The boy replied glaring at him. At a signal from the man, a guard stepped forward and thrust his weapon into the small of Rick's back, making him flinch.

"Are you sure?" The man asked again. He nodded and the guard stepped back, raising his gun to point it at Otto. He began to squeeze the trigger.

"Wait!" Rick shouted.

"Yes?" The man asked, eyebrows raised.

"My name's Rick." He replied, gritting his teeth.

"Very good. Grab the boy on the floor and take him to the helicopter." The man continued.

"What? No!" Rick cried. He spun around and landed a vicious blow to the neck of the guard bending down to lift up Otto and pulled the gun from the soldier's grasp. Then turning on his heel, he raised the muzzle of the weapon and aimed it at the man in white.

"Who are you?" He asked, finger pressed tightly against the trigger.

"My name is Alexander. And I suggest you put down that gun before you get hurt." The man replied.

"Oh yeah? And what are you going to do to me?"

"Rick!" Laura suddenly shouted. Too late. A rifle butt slammed into the back of his head and he dropped to the floor unconscious, beside his brother.

"Such a pity." Alexander said and he strode over to one of the monoliths, pulling out a small black cube and examining it. Gently he placed it into a pocket and headed for the door "Let's leave. Don't forget the boy."

Half of the guards left with him and the rest stayed behind to keep and eye on the prisoners, guns raised. No - one stopped to pick up Otto. Then one of the men who'd left hurried back and looked down at the two boys frowning. He'd been on the opposite side of the monoliths and had not seen who was who.

The man gazed around at his fellow comrades, seeking help. But they ignored him not even bothering to glance his way. Then looking back down he sighed. After some quick thinking the guard bent down and hoisted Rick over his shoulder, leaving the room at a run.

As he left, Laura took a step towards Otto who was still unconscious. The man behind her growled and she spun around her eyes blazing, hands on hips.

"He needs help! Can't you see that? Haven't you done enough damage already? I just want to check that he's still breathing. Or is that too much to ask for? Come on! Speak up!" She spat, heart racing. For a moment he looked surprised. But then the guard regained his composure and gestured towards the boy, giving his permission for her to move. She nodded curtly and walked over to Otto, her breath leaving her in a quick exhale.

Bending down, Laura brushed her fingertips lightly against the boy's neck. She could feel the faintest flutter of his heart beat and realised that it was the first time that she'd ever felt it. That thought brought tears to her eyes.

"Is he alright?" Raven asked from her position, surrounded by guards. One of them scowled at her but she ignored him.

"Yeah. He's fine for now." She replied, gulping.

There was a sudden THUMP outside and Laura whipped her head round. The sound had caused the ground to vibrate and she feared what could have made such a ripple.

BANG!

Raven's eyes widened. The door to the cavern had buckled inwards from the impact. She watched as a giant metal hand pushed it's way through the gap between the door and the wall, took a hold of it and ripped the sheet of steel back into the corridor, the hinges flying.

Several of the guards dropped their weapons and knelt, their hands in the air. The rest opened fire on whatever the thing was. To one side, Professor Pike was grinning like a maniac.

Into the cavern stepped a giant robot, roughly the size of a man but much wider. The machine's footsteps sent quivers through the floor and where it stepped the ground dented. Cables extended from it's arms and legs, lights flashing along them.

The robot's eyes were blue.

15. Chapter 15

****Thanks to all the great people who reviewed the last chapter. Your comments were absolutely brilliant! Don't forget to review this chapter as well!****

****ENJOY!****

****Chapter 15****

Bullets pinged off of metal. Hearts raced. Men screamed in rage or fear. Panic hung thick in the air like fog, infecting everyone. Things had gotten out of control.

The guards had long since abandoned their duty to watch the prisoners. They were too concerned with the robot, firing wildly at it and then being struck down with the shells that were deflected back at them. Some threw grenades at the machine but the weapons just blew up harmlessly against its thick metal hide. Others tried to strategically place detonations at weak points in its armour but many couldn't get close enough. If they did, the robot merely flicked them away with a brush of one arm, sending them flying through the air to land with a crack against the wall.

As the battle raged, the prisoners hid behind the monoliths, partly to avoid being seen and partly to keep away from the bullets that were fired in random directions. Laura was desperately cutting through Raven's bonds with her katanas and Ms Leon was yowling from the harsh sounds of war. She lay down and tried to block out the noises with her paws. Sometimes being a cat could have its advantages. At other times it could be a real pain in the neck.

"Done!" Laura shouted as the chains around the assassin fell to the floor. The woman grabbed the katanas from the girl and hefted them in her hands. Then she grinned at them and ran out into the thick of the battle, cutting down men as she tried to get to the door.

"Where do you think she's going?" Laura asked, watching Raven leave the cavern.

"Where else? To get Rick and H.I.V.E. mind's seed core. By the way why does he look remarkably like Otto?" Professor Pike asked, frowning.

"You don't know? Well they're sort of like brothers. Twin brothers. With Rick being two months older. And..." The girl trailed off remembering the kiss she'd given him and mentally shook her head. It was his fault not hers. And Otto didn't need to know about it.

A man screamed and suddenly silence descended upon the cavern. The two of them stood up, leaving the unconscious boy and the cat where they were. They rounded the monoliths and gazed at the chaos that had been caused.

Men lay scattered across the floor dead or dying, bullets peppered between them. Smoke drifted into the air from a fire at a terminal against the wall. The doors were missing and sheets of metal seemed to be embedded in the ground. On the far side of the cavern stood the robot, eyes glowing blue. It turned towards them as they walked over to it and dropped the piece of the door it'd been holding with a clang.

"Thank you for coming to our rescue H.I.V.E. mind." Professor pike said with a smile. The machine inclined its head in their direction and then pointed over to the central pedestal. His distinct wire - frame face slowly materialised and he smiled back at them.

"How is Otto?" He asked with a slight frown.

"He's stable for now. But the attackers have Rick and your seed core. They're heading for the hangar bay and Raven's gone after them." Laura replied, running back to the boy and checking that he was indeed alright. She sighed as she felt his heart beat still going strong if a little faint.

"What happened in here?" A voice called from the doorway. They spun around to see Nero, Shelby and Wing walking into the room their eyes wide. As the man's eyes alighted on the robot he sighed. "I told you not to destroy the place if you could help it."

"Laura!" Shelby cried, running over to her friend and grabbing her in a hug. The girl responded by bursting out into tears and she stroked her hair, frowning. "Hey what's wrong?"

"Otto... He... He's unconscious and Raven... She said he needed a scan and... And I kissed Rick!" Laura muttered, through her sobbing. Her friend pulled back and looked at her with wide eyes.

"You did what?" Shelby asked, in disbelief. "Reality is soooo much better than the fake romance you get in films and stuff. You have to give me all the details..."

"What! Otto might be in a coma and all you care about is what the kiss with Rick was like. Which doesn't matter as he's probably dead by now." Laura said. She walked away to where the unconscious boy was lying and knelt beside him. Nero, Wing and Professor Pike were already there, talking amongst themselves.

"He looks fine..." Shelby mumbled under her breath, arms

crossed.

"He won't be. Pike informs me that the electrical discharge that he was subjected to could have short - circuited the computer chip in his head, which would in turn have fried his brain and most probably given him brain damage." Nero replied, hearing her. The girl's eyes widened and she glanced back down at the boy who could have been sleeping.

"Where's Raven and Rick?" He continued, directing his question at the Professor.

"Rick was taken by the attackers, assumingly mistaken for Otto. They were headed for the hangar. And Raven went after them, to retrieve him and the seed core. The leader of the operation came here himself to get it." Pike replied, solemnly.

"The leader? Who was he?" Nero asked, frowning.

"Erm..." The teacher struggled to recall the name and began muttering to himself.

"His name was Alexander." Laura said helpfully, gripping Otto's lifeless hand.

"Alexander?" Nero said, his eyes widening. They took on a far away look and then suddenly snapped back, clear and focused.

"H.I.V.E. mind? Bring the robot. Wing and Shelby come with me. We have to get to the hangar bay before they leave!" He shouted, racing for the doorway.

* * *

><p>Raven came to a sudden halt outside the hangar bay, her breathing harsh and rapid. She held her katanas at her side and crouched low, peering through the small sliver of a gap between the doors. A blast of air swirled through it, brushing her hair and sending a shiver up her spine. She could hear the sounds of engines starting up with short barking coughs and hurriedly shouted orders. There was a low whine and her eyes widened. Without another thought, she pushed open the doors and leapt down the stairs towards the helicopters that were slowly rising into the air.<p>

The woman dropped her katanas and pulled a shuriken from her tactical belt as she ran. With a yell of anger, she launched it into the air aiming for the aircraft that was shielded on all sides by others. Except that it's belly was unprotected and the small weapon was arcing towards it. Raven stopped on the floor of the hangar bay and watched her eyes wide.

By now the helicopters were three - quarters of the way out of the cavern. The shuriken glinted in the light from above, its sharp edges twinkling with a terrible beauty. Hidden within it was a tracking device. She'd used it once before to track down Cypher and all she could do was hope it would work again this time. There was a muffled thunk as it struck the metal underside of the aircraft.

Raven shut her eyes upon the assorted helicopters as they disappeared over the rim of the hangar bay entrance. She bowed her head and let

out a deep breath. Beside her, the shuriken clattered on the concrete floor.

"Where are they?" A voice called from the doorway. Nero, closely followed by Shelby , Wing and a group of Darkdoom's men entered the cavern. Behind them came the robot from the H.I.V.E. mind's Central Processing Unit, lumbering to a halt in the corridor.

"Gone. They got away with the seed core and Rick." Raven replied, pocketing the shuriken and picking up her katanas. "And I have no idea where they're heading." She added.

"Laura told me about the leader of the attack. His name was Alexander? What did he look like?" Nero asked quietly, as the men fanned out to search the hangar.

"He was blond with a white suit. Why?" The assassin asked, frowning.

"This is not good. I'll explain later. Right now the rest of Darkdoom's men are cleaning up the last of the attackers. Would you mind helping them? Then meet me in the medical bay. We'll discuss what to do next there." Nero said. She nodded and sprinted out to the cavern.

"What should we do sir?" Shelby asked from behind him. He spun around, adorning a reassuring smile.

"Don't you worry. Get back to your accommodation block and check up on the other students." The man said, walking away.

"But what about Rick? He's Otto's brother. When Otto wakes up, there's nothing on this island that's going to stop him from leaving to find him." Wing said, arms crossed.

"You're right Mr Fanchu. But we don't know the extent of damage to Otto's brain. For all we know he may not wake up. Stay optimistic though. Otto is full of surprises." Nero said, with a slight smile. He turned away and came face to face with the robot. "H.I.V.E. mind. Thank you for your help, but I'm afraid we no longer require your services. You may return this shell to its storage room."

The machine inclined its head and plodded off.

"Give me strength." Nero muttered under his breath, before leaving the hangar bay, all activity around him forgotten.

* * *

><p>Laura sat with her back against the wall, arms wrapped around her legs and her forehead resting upon her knees. Beside her, Wing paced back and forth across the corridor, ignoring Shelby who kept telling him to stop because he would soon wear a groove into the floor. Nigel and Franz were also present, having heard the news. The latter had brought a bag of snacks just in case they got hungry but even he couldn't bring himself to touch the food.<p>

Several hours had passed and there had been no news on Otto's condition. Scans had been taken but the doctor had said that it would take time to analyse the results, though he'd assured them that it

was his top priority. The hostiles down in the Hydroponics Facility had been dealt with swiftly and without any mercy. And Darkdoom had decided to stay with his men for a while just in case the attackers came back for a renewed strike.

A quick search of the school had shown them that they needed all the help that they could get. The classrooms had been trashed, tables lying in haphazard angles. The Communications Centre was on fire as was H.I.V.E. mind's Central Processing Unit. Men had been dispatched immediately to put them out and clean up the glass, the bullets, the unexploded grenades and bodies that littered the school. And all the questions from the students had needed to be answered. A hurried message from H.I.V.E. mind to everyone's blackboxes had sorted that problem as had a lockdown of the accommodation blocks.

Nero strode down the hallway and stopped when he saw the five students there, their faces glum. He sighed and walked over to a door indented into the wall on his left, pushing it open with a twist of the handle. Inside the room beyond he could see Otto lying in the hospital bed, a drip in his arm and an oxygen mask over his face. A nurse sat in a chair next to him, watching the heart monitor bleeping steadily. He gave her small nod and then retreated.

"Going to tell us who Alexander was then?" Raven asked from his right. She was stood leaning against the wall, one eyebrow raised. Suddenly Wing stopped and looked over as did his friends, their attention fixed on the teacher.

"First..." Nero began, taking a deep breath.

"Just get on with it Max. The sooner you tell me, the sooner I can try to find him." The assassin said firmly.

"Okay." He looked around at each of them and then finally at the door before him. An innocent boy had been hurt because of that man. And still he could not bring himself to say who he was.

"Max...?" Raven asked, worried all of a sudden.

Wordlessly he reached into the inner breast pocket of his jacket and pulled out a folded piece of paper. With shaking hands he handed it gently over to the woman, keeping his eyes averted. She took it with a frown and glanced at the students who watched her with a hungry look. It was evidently clear that they wanted the mysterious man dead as did she. But looking at Nero told her that for him, it would be harder to find revenge in his heart.

Raven slowly unfolded the sheet of paper and looked at the scene captured there. She was holding a photograph that was slightly faded by age and crinkled. It had been taken in front of a house, only two floors high and with an overgrown front garden. Sitting on the wall enclosing the small lawn and under a tree was a man and a boy. The child looked about ten and had a giant grin plastered on his face. His hair was blond. The man in comparison had black hair and was dressed in a black suit, smiling only slightly. It was unmistakably Nero.

"This doesn't tell me who Alexander is." Raven said. The man reached out and turned the photograph over. She looked down to see what was there.

1986 - Alexander Nero with his elder brother Maximillian Nero. May there souls rest in peace.

16. Chapter 16

****I would like to thank everyone graciously for there contribution to this fic through reviews! Your comments were GREAT! But alas, this is the last chapter of Two of a Kind. Fear not though, as there will be a sequel! It's called De Ja Vu! But enough of that. Read and review! But most importantly...****

****ENJOY!****

****Chapter 16****

"He's your brother."

The whispered sentence hung heavy in the air. Raven could hardly believe it. In all the time she'd known Nero, he'd never said a word about his family and now this.

"Explain." She said firmly, handing back the photograph. He took it and hid it away in his pocket, eyes to the floor. Out of the corner of her eye, she registered that the students were still watching and listening with wide eyes, but she ignored them, folding her arms.

"That photograph was sent to H.I.V.E. after my brother..." Nero hesitated, taking a deep breath. "... Alexander and I were presumed dead in the 9/11 terrorist attack. We were meant to be at the Trade Centre for a meeting but we began arguing. My brother had wanted to come teach at the school but I wouldn't let him. He was inexperienced and I knew that he was unreliable. He always had been. Though that's not how he saw it. Alex said that the age difference between us was why I didn't like him. That my parents preferred him to me and I was jealous. But at the age of twenty five he still acted like the arrogant teenager of his youth. A bit like you guys though a whole lot worse." He said with a meaningful look in the direction of the students.

"Did you ever tell your parents that you hadn't died in the bombing?" Shelby asked in a small voice.

"No of course not." Nero replied, shaking his head. "I never got the chance. They were old. My dad was lost to cancer. My mother to grief. And my brother disappeared in the confusion. I haven't seen him in ten years. And I have no idea why he attacked H.I.V.E. today."

"Well that leaves us no closer to finding out where he might have gone. I'm going to go see Professor Pike. Maybe he's found something using the satellites." Raven said quietly, walking away. They watched her as she rounded the corner and out of sight.

"Can we see Otto now?" Laura suddenly asked, looking up with bloodshot eyes.

"Yeah. Of course you can." Nero said with a slight smile. He opened the door and gestured for them to follow him inside. The five of them

entered and gathered around the lone bed, gazing at the boy lying there.

They stood there in silence, each gripped by their own thoughts. Then there was a knock and Dr Scott walked in. It was as if a drain stopper had been released. Everyone began talking at once in a tide of words, asking questions that had plagued them and which they feared the answers to.

Is he alright?

When will he wake up?

Will he ever wake up?

The man held up his hands and slowly the questions died down into silence once more.

"The results of his brain scans are in. According to the charts and graphs, Mr Malpense is in a coma. And we don't know when he's going to wake up or if indeed he ever will wake up. It could be tonight, next week, next year or... never. As for damage, we couldn't say until he wakes up." Dr Scott explained.

The atmosphere of hope that had filled the air with his arrival faded back to the despair. As one, the group turned back to the boy. They'd wait as long as necessary.

* * *

><p>Pain. He could feel it in his shoulders and arms. The boy tried to wiggle his fingers but he couldn't feel them. He opened his eyes, but could only see darkness. It pressed in on him from all sides and he gasped, trying to fight down the panic clawing its way through him.<p>

Voices. They drifted on the air like gentle music soothing his racing heart. He was not alone and that was all that mattered.

The sound of bolts being drawn back. Someone opening a door perhaps?

And then blinding light forcing him to squint to protect his eyes. Somewhere at the back of his mind, he registered that it came from a light overhead.

"This isn't Otto!"

Rick's eyes suddenly adjusted and the first thing he saw was Alexander staring back at him, a snarl disfiguring his handsome face.

"I said to bring the other one!" He shouted to the guards either side of him. They stood to attention, gaze fixated on the far wall.

The boy took the time to quickly study his surroundings. He was in a small cell with a cast iron door as thick as his arm and two metres tall. Looking up, he realised why his arms were aching. They had his wrists tied to the roof by chains and his ankles fixed to the floor. And over to the right his shirt lay discarded on the cold stone

floor. That explained why he was shivering.

Alexander suddenly gripped his jaw and twisted it this way and that.

"You're another clone aren't you?" He said to himself, anger replaced by curiosity. Rick didn't answer, just glared at him.

"Maybe you could be useful after all. You see... " The man continued, releasing him. "I need to get a message to my brother. You know him? Max? Or more specifically known as Nero? It doesn't matter. Not really. What does matter, is that I have no way of communicating between myself and him. And travelling is such a chore. What I need is him to come to me."

"And you want me to what?" Rick asked, through gritted teeth.

"I hear that twins can feel each others pain. I wouldn't know myself of course. And you're a clone. A clone of the same person that Otto is. That makes you twins. Twins with a deeper connection than most. You can send a message to Otto. I'm sure he'll pass it on to Nero for me."

"If you think we're telepathic then you're going to be disappointed." The boy said, rolling his eyes.

"No I'm not. Because you may not be able to speak in each other's minds but you sure will be able to feel each others pain. All I have to do is make you suffer. And I'm sure Otto will come running with Nero to your rescue and consequently, their doom." Alexander said a gleam in his eyes. Rick's own widened, understanding the cold logic behind the idea.

He hadn't noticed one of the guard's walk behind him. There was a crack and a knife - like pain, shot from his shoulder to his waist. He screamed out in agony, feeling blood begin to trickle down his bare back. He grit his teeth against the sting and shut his eyes.

And then there was another crack. Followed by another. And another.

Alexander left the cell, walking down the corridor beyond, the boy's feral screams reverberating back and forth along the passage. He smiled to himself.

* * *

><p>Laura sat in the nurse's chair, her hand gripping Otto's and her head resting on the bed. She was fast asleep, her breathing slow and gentle. It mirrored the steady beeping of the heart monitoring machine beside her.<p>

Everyone else had gone to bed tired out by the day's events. But she'd refused to leave his side, claiming that if he awoke there needed to be someone there for him.

A shiver ran through her despite the warmth of the room.

And Otto's sharp blue eyes snapped open, a scream echoing in his

head.

* * *

><p>I hope that everyone liked this chapter! :D Anyhow, I will not be updating for the next three weeks as I want there to be time for people to catch up with the story if they've been busy with exams. I know that's a loooooooooooooong time but it will go fast.

So just to get things clear; I will not update until the 2nd of February 2012. Unless people really want me to and say in so in their reviews. Then I may see sense and update earlier. If so, I'll warn you guys on the forum. :D

And don't forget the title! DE JA VU... Now I wonder what that could possibly mean? Hehehehehe...

P.S. Kadash if you're reading this you've accidentally disabled your PM system again. :S

End
file.